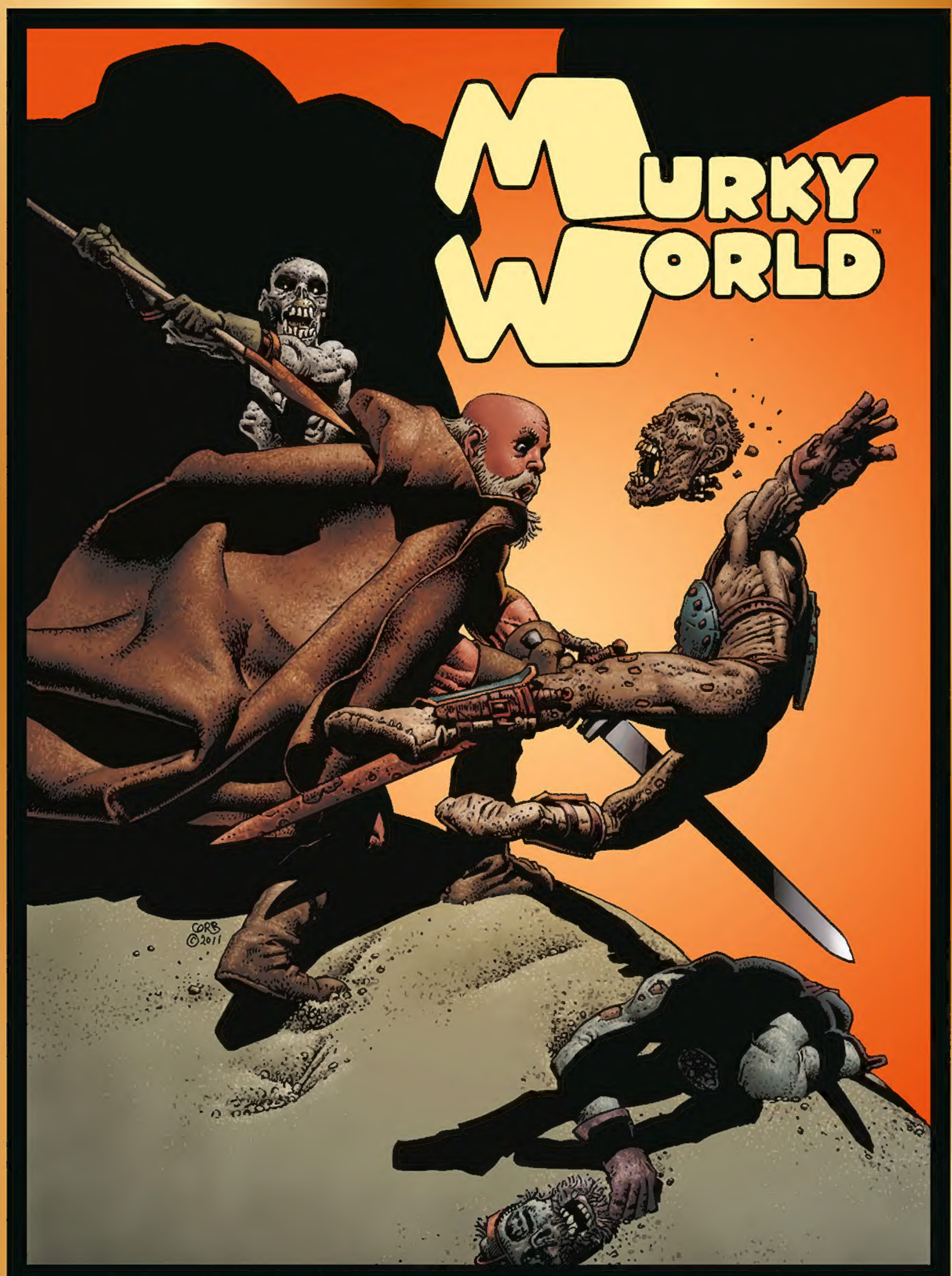

RICHARD CORBEN

MURKY WORLD™

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Story Collaboration Pages (97-108)

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MURKY WORLD
2012 ONE-SHOT

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Published by
Dark Horse Books
A division of Dark Horse Comics LLC
10956 SE Main Street
Milwaukie, OR 97222

DarkHorse.com

To find a comics shop in your area, visit comicshoplocator.com

First edition: May 2023
Ebook ISBN 978-1-50673-475-0
Hardcover ISBN 978-1-50673-474-3

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Printed in China

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INTRODUCTION

"**Richard Corben** stands among us like an extraterrestrial peak. He has sat in his throne for a long time, above the moving and multi-colored field of world comics, like an effigy of the leader, a strange monolith, a sublime visitor, a solitary enigma."

I wish like hell I'd written that, but that was Moebius on Corben, and it's as brilliant a summing up of Richard (artist and man) as I can imagine.

I'm pretty sure I discovered both Moebius and Corben on the same day, way back when, in one of the first issues of *Heavy Metal* magazine. I was a Marvel Comics fan, but even the cosmic wonder of Kirby's Fantastic Four and Thor didn't prepare me for the double shot of *Arzach* and *Den*. But why? Both strips were beautifully drawn, of course, but there was something more—and it's something I've given a lot of thought to over the years—personal vision. When you look at *Den* (or *Murky World*), you don't just see a world (murky or otherwise), you see Corben's world—his people, his places. There is no mistaking those images. There are a lot of wonderful comic book artists out there, but so often (especially in American comics) all I can see in their work is how well they can render a figure or a car . . . Impressive, but I get no sense of who that artist is, what's actually rattling around in his or her head. So many artists put their ability on the page but never quite put *themselves* on the page. Richard, pretty much from day one, was putting *himself* on the page—and it's hard to imagine a more fearless expressing of an artist's singular vision. When I created Hellboy, that's what I was trying to do—put something out there that was pure me. But I was coming out of ten years of drawing mainstream comics, so my transition was a slow one; it took a long time to find my voice, create my world. I don't know that I ever thought of Richard specifically as a model for what I was trying to do, but looking back now I think he was certainly one of those creators that pointed the way for me, even if I didn't realize it at the time.

Eventually I got a chance to work with Richard, something the young me never could have imagined. I wrote *The Crooked Man* specifically for him, and I still consider it one of the most successful *Hellboy* stories. It's my personal favorite. I could tell some stories about what it was like collaborating with Richard, but those are for another time—maybe the intro for an all-Corben *Hellboy* collection? I'd love to see that (hint, hint, Dark Horse), but that's not what we are here for today. I remember asking Richard about doing more Hellboy stories and him telling me that he really needed to get back to doing his own stuff. Now at that time I believe he was around seventy years old, and here he was chomping at the bit to get back to doing his own stuff. I visited him around that time and while, yes, he was very much the "solitary enigma" there was also something almost childlike about his enthusiasm as he showed me the pages he was working on. I have known a lot of artists who lose that—that magic something that keeps them excited to

get to the drawing table in the morning—and having done this stuff for almost forty years now, I get it—but I think Richard had it right to the end.

I did a signing some years back, and a kid asked me who this "new guy Richard Corben" was that was drawing *Hellboy*. I was a little taken aback. I mentioned a bunch of earlier Corben work—*Den*, *Arabian Nights*, *Bloodstar*—the kid was unaware of all of it and, sadly, that day I realized how long it had been since any of that stuff had been in print. Finally I asked the kid if he was into music and if he knew that iconic Meatloaf Bat out of Hell album cover. He knew that (of course), and I said, "That's Corben." Now it was the kid's turn to be stunned as he realized that this "new guy" had actually been around for quite a while. And I just love that story because Richard, after all those years, still really could pass as one of the hot new guys. I mean, look (finally) at *Murky World*. Done a few years after his *Hellboy* work, something like thirty-five years after the stuff I first fell in love with in *Heavy Metal*, I think in just about every way it is as good as anything Corben ever did. Certainly the drawing is as good, if not better. I think his storytelling is better. And the story . . . Well, it's pure Corben, and for that I am very, very grateful.

Sadly the "strange monolith," the "sublime visitor," is gone, but what a body of work he's left behind. A big thank-you to Daniel Chabon and Dark Horse Comics for their support of Richard and their commitment to getting so much of his work back into print—and an even bigger thank-you to Dona and Beth Corben Reed for making it all possible.

I didn't really know Richard beyond our email exchanges, one phone call, and that one magic afternoon in his studio, but the creator he was . . . The inspiration he was and is . . . These days when I sit down at my drawing table, Richard is a huge part of whatever it is I'm trying to do there. I hope somehow he knows that.

MIKE MIGNOLA

Photo by Mike Shields

IN THIS **OPAQUE** MIST, THINGS ARE NEVER CLEARLY SEEN. IT IS AN OMNIPRESENT **SMOG** PERHAPS CAUSED BY A SUPERNATURALLY THICK AND HEAVY ATMOSPHERE. A PERPETUALLY OVERHANGING **FOG** THAT SOFTENS ALL PERCEPTIONS.

SOMETHING STIRS. A NEBULOUS FORM CONDENSES INTO AN UNSETTLING CLARITY.

DON'T BE **SCARED!** IT'S JUST ME, **MAG THE HAG.** I'M HERE TO TELL A STORY.

THAT YON PATHETIC FIGURE, APPARENTLY ASLEEP, IS **TUGAT.** HE'S HAD A HARD TIME SO FAR. SO HARD THAT HE CAN'T REMEMBER THE DETAILS CLEARLY. JUST LIKE MOST THINGS HERE IN -

MURKY WORLD!

BUT I'M GOING TO **HELP** HIM.

HEY TUGAT, **WAKE UP!** YOU'VE GOT THINGS TO DO, PLACES TO GO, A **DESTINY** TO FULFILL!

IT'S TIME TO GET UP AND BE ON YOUR WAY.

WHAT? WHO ARE YOU?

I'M YOUR **FAIRY GOD-MOTHER.** I'M HERE TO GET YOU GOING.

I DON'T GET IT.

I'LL SHOW YOU.

I'M TRYING TO REMEMBER SOMETHING IMPORTANT.

NEVER MIND **THAT** NOW. YOU SHOULD BE ON YOUR WAY. YOUR PATH IS THROUGH THIS **TANGLED WOOD.**

ARE YOU KIDDING?

YOUR GOAL IS THAT **CITADEL.** MUCH WILL BE REVEALED WITHIN THAT BUILDING. THERE YOU WILL REST AND BE **REFRESHED.**

BUT WHATEVER YOU DO **DON'T** GO TO THE OTHER ONE FURTHER WEST. THERE WILL BE NOTHING BUT **TROUBLE** THERE.

THERE'S ONE MORE THING BEFORE YOU GO.

SMAK!

REMEMBER **THIS.** THERE WILL COME A TIME WHEN ALL THOSE **PRETTY YOUNG WOMEN** WILL TURN YOU DOWN. **I WON'T.**

DON'T **FORGET.** AND, YOU MIGHT NEED **THIS!**

THUS GENTLE TUGAT BEGAN HIS QUEST.

FOR SOMETHING HE WAS UNSURE OF.

HE PUSHED THROUGH NARROW GAPS IN THE DENSE GROWTH.

CRAZY OLD HAG! WHY SHOULD I STRUGGLE THROUGH THIS CONFUSING MESH?

-WITH SINISTER LURKING **BEASTS** LYING IN WAIT AT EVERY TURN AND READY TO SPRING.

-AND **CHOKING KNOTS** OF SWAMP TREES IMPEDING EVERY MOVE. HOW IN THE **HELL** AM I GOING TO GET OUT OF THIS?

-AND I SENSE EVEN **WORSE** DANGER.

-AND NASTY POISONOUS **SNAKES.**

WHAT WAS THAT, BRUSHED MY EAR?

A DART!

SOMETHING OR SOMEONE HAS JUST WADED THROUGH HERE.

OOPS! DODGE QUICK!

FMP!

HEY! WHY DO YOU ATTACK ME?

WHAT ARE YOU? - WOMAN? - OR WHAT?

NEVER YOU MIND! YOU ARE AN INTRUDER. YOU MUST BE STOPPED!

BY THE GODS, YOU ARE SURELY - UGLY!

NOT NEARLY AS UGLY AS YOU ARE GOING TO BE -AND DON'T CALL ME SHIRLEY!

OW!!

SO THAT'S HOW IT IS, EH?

TEMPER, TEMPER!

GRRR! BITCH!

WHERE THE HELL?

DAMNATION! HOW DID SHE DISAPPEAR SO FAST? I GUESS IT WAS A "SHE"!

WHAT A **STRANGE** CREATURE! I'D BETTER GET ON WITH MY QUEST, SUCH AS IT IS. THIS WAY, I THINK!

THE **CITADEL**, JUST LIKE THE HAG SAID. IT SEEMS UNNATURALLY **QUIET**, BUT IT WASN'T TOO HARD.

EASY, ACTUALLY. WHAT A STRANGE BUILDING. LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE HERE.

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO GET IN **THERE**?

OH, **THERE'S** THE OLD HAG! WHAT'S SHE DOING? I CAN'T **HEAR** HER. **CHEERING** ME ON I GUESS.

NO, NO, YOU **MORON**! THAT'S THE WRONG ONE! YOU'VE REALLY **MESSED** UP!

-AND WHAT I SAID EARLIER, **FORGET IT**! YOU PROBABLY WON'T **LAST** TOO MUCH LONGER ANYWAY.

THANKS OLD WOMAN, BUT I CAN TAKE IT FROM HERE. JUST MOVE FORWARD.

THE PORTAL GAPES, A HUNGRY MOUTH. COBWEBS LIKE FLESHY TATTERS DRIFT WITH DREAMY SLOWNESS.

TUGAT FEELS A PATH STONE SHIFT BENEATH HIS FEET.

HE IS SPRUNG TOWARD THE TARGET HOLE IN EERIE SILENCE.

THEN ALL IS AS IT WAS AN INSTANT BEFORE, MUTE AND UNMOVING.

WITHIN, HE IS CONFRONTED BY A GAY MASQUERADE.

HELLO, SIR. WE WEREN'T EXPECTING ANY MORE GUESTS. WELCOME TO OUR LITTLE CHARADE-

THIS IS A **VAST** COUNTRY OF DIVERSE **TABLEAUS**, INVESTED WITH STRANGE **CREATURES** OF OBSCURE MOTIVATIONS THAT IS -

MURKY WORLD!

A SHORT WHILE AGO **TUGAT**, AN ERST-WHILE WOULD-BE **ADVENTURER**, CAME BY HERE AND DESPITE MY ATTEMPTS TO GUIDE HIM, **FLOUNDERED** INTO THAT BUILDING. I THINK HE REALLY **NEEDED** MY HELP.

HE DIDN'T NOTICE THE CITADEL WAS PENETRATED BY SINISTER **HERBAGE** THAT SEEMED TO THROB WITH UNNATURAL VOLITION. COULD HE NOW BE CONFRONTING SOME THINGS **NEITHER** PLANT **NOR** ANIMAL?

HELLO!

WHO ARE **YOU**? WERE YOU INVITED?

I AM **TUBAT.** WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

THIS IS A **PRIVATE** MASQUERADE, AND I'VE GOT A GOOD MIND TO **KICK** YOUR **BUTT** OUT OF HERE.

WAIT, BRONZE. LET HIM **STAY.** I LIKE HIS **STRANGENESS.** AN **OUTSIDER,** I'LL BET!

OKAY, YOU CAN **STAY** - BUT YOU'D BETTER **BEHAVE.**

I'M NOT HERE TO **PARTY.**

DOUBTLESS, AN **ARIES!**

WHO IS IN **CHARGE?** THIS DOESN'T SEEM **RIGHT.** EVERYTHING LOOKS **DISTORTED.** MAYBE THIS IS THE **WRONG** PLACE. I'VE GOT TO GET ON WITH MY **QUEST.**

REALLY? **YOU** DON'T LOOK RIGHT **EITHER.**

BUT THERE IS **SOMETHING** ABOUT YOU THAT IS **FAMILIAR.**

OH **WOW!** HOW **ORIGINAL** IS THAT THE LINE YOU **ALWAYS** USE?

I HAVEN'T GOT TIME FOR THIS. IS THAT THE **MASTER** OF THE ESTATE?

CERTAINLY **NOT**. JUST IGNORE THAT PERSON.

IT'S ONLY ONE OF OUR **MEMBERS**. APPARENTLY FALLEN **ASLEEP** FROM TOO MUCH **PARTYING**.

I'M THE MASTER! PAY ATTENTION TO **ME**!

I'VE GOT TO **TALK** TO HIM. YOU **BITCHES** HAD JUST BETTER STAY **OUT** OF THE WAY!

BITCHES!? THAT WAS VERY **RUDE**, TUGAT.

OWH!

THUD!

TSATHOGGUA, DAMN IT! YOU CAN'T **STOP** ME!

WOULDN'T **DREAM** OF IT, HONEY. LET'S BE **FRIENDS!**

AGH!!

PUT ME **DOWN!**

OOF!

IS EVERYBODY HERE **"SISTERS"** OR SOMETHING?

MUCH **CLOSER** THAN THAT, TUGAT.

HEH, HEH, HEH! YOU ARE REALLY **STUPID**, TUGAT.

MY **MINIONS** ARE MUCH **TOUGHER** THAN YOU IMAGINE. YOU WOULDN'T STAND A **CHANCE**.

BUT I'LL **DISMISS** THEM FOR NOW.

WHAT'S THAT? **STICKS** AND **TWIGS**?

BUT **YOU** DON'T SEEM SO **TOUGH** TO ME.

DON'T **TRY** ANYTHING! LITTLE **ESRIG** WOULD JUST LOVE TO **GOBBLE** YOU UP. AND DON'T THINK HE COULDN'T DO IT. HE'S NOT EXACTLY OF THIS **WORLD**.

I PROBABLY WOULDN'T MIND **CHEWING** ON YOU EITHER. YOUR IMAGINED **PROWESS** WOULDN'T STOP **EITHER** OF US FOR A **SECOND**.

YOU'RE **LESS** THAN A FOOL, TUGAT. YOU'VE BEEN **TRICKED** INTO ENTERING A GAME YOU CAN'T EVEN **THINK** OF WINNING.

BUT I'M PURSUING MY **DESTINY.**

OF **COURSE** YOU ARE! AND I ADVISE YOU TO **DIG** A HOLE AND **FALL** INTO IT BECAUSE THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE **"DESTINY"** YOU CAN HOPE FOR IS TO BECOME **WORM FOOD.**

YOU ARE **DOOMED** TO FOLLOW AN **ENDLESS** STRING OF **FUTILE** ENDEAVORS. THOSE YOU **LOVE** WILL **DIE** IN PAIN, **CURSING** YOU.

GOODBYE FOR **NOW,** TUGAT. WE WILL MEET **AGAIN,** AND YOU WILL **PRAY** TO YOUR GODS THAT WE **HADN'T.**

OH YEAH?! **FUCK YOU!!!**

HEY!!

WHAT? WHO IS THAT?

RUMBLE

TIME TO GO!

DAMN THING'S STUCK!

RUMBLE

IF I CAN JUST GET THROUGH HERE BEFORE EVERYTHING COLLAPSES.

OH NO! NOT YOU AGAIN. PUT THAT THING DOWN!

OOWWH! DAMN IT!

HEY, YOU!

HEY, WAKE UP!!

WHAT? YOU, YOU'RE-

HEY, WAKE UP!

-DIFFERENT. WHERE AM I? WHO ARE YOU? WHAT HAPPENED?

I AM **MOJA!** YOU WERE **ASLEEP.** I NEED SOME **HELP.**

-WITH THIS **DAMNED** COLLAR.

TUGAT RISES FROM A FITFUL SLUMBER A **BEARDLESS YOUTH.** HE PONDERS AN APPARENT DREAM OF **PREMONITION,** YET HE NOW HAS A SWORD. I TOLD HIM TO **BEWARE** OF PRETTY YOUNG GIRLS ... BUT I DON'T THINK HE WAS PAYING ANY ATTENTION.

THAT COLLAR IS PRETTY **SUBSTANTIAL** BUT A WELL-PLACED WHACK MIGHT BREAK IT.

JUST DON'T HIT **ME.**

IN A REMOTE SPOT OF THIS **MURKY WORLD** A DENSE, PALPABLE ATMOSPHERE SHROUDED TWO CONFUSED PILGRIMS.

MURKY WORLD!

HOLD STILL!

KRAK!

THERE, MOJA. YOU'RE **FREE.** HOW DID YOU COME TO BE TETHERED SO?

OH! THAT'S **BETTER!** THAT THING WAS REALLY WEARING ME **DOWN.**

UH- I WAS **KIDNAPPED** BY A **SLAVER.** I ESCAPED.

WHAT ABOUT YOU, TUGAT? DO YOU LIVE AROUND HERE?

YES. WITH MY **MASTER OBEX.**

OH **DAMNATION!** I FORGOT TO DO MY CHORES. I'M GOING TO GET A **BEATING.**

MASTER OBEX IS VERY **WISE** IN MANY THINGS. HE TRIES TO TEACH ME.

BUT I AM **STUPID.**

OR JUST GENERALLY **CONFUSED.**

MASTER OBEX TOLD ME THERE ARE UNKNOWN **BAD** MEMORIES BURIED DEEP IN ME.

BUT THE CLOUDS WILL DISSIPATE SOMEDAY.

WHAT ABOUT THE **SWORD?**

I WAS ASLEEP, DREAMING. IT WAS JUST **THERE.**

GREAT THASAIDON! THAT'S MASTER OBEX'S HOUSE, **BURNING!**

I MUST FIND HIM!

WHAT FROM THE SEVEN HELLS IS **THAT?**

A DEAD **ZOMBIE** WARRIOR.

THESE CREATURES ARE REANIMATED BY **NECROMANCY**, USED BY SOME UNSCRUPULOUS WARLORDS AS CHEAP SOLDIERS. THIS ONE HAS BEEN APPARENTLY **REKILLED**. THE **HEAD** IS THE ONLY VULNERABLE TARGET.

LISTEN, TUGAT. YOU HELPED ME. WE SHOULD GET OUT OF HERE **FAST**.

I **CAN'T**. I MUST FIND MY MASTER OBEX.

AAH!

NOOOO! OH HATEFUL FATE! TO KILL MY BELOVED MASTER- OOOOH!

HEY, YOU! WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

I AM TUBAT, WARD OF **MASTER OBEX.** IF YOU KILLED HIM, **YOU** SHALL SURELY DIE IN A MOMENT.

BACK OFF, YOU MORON! YOU ARE MAKING MY GUARDS **NERVOUS.**

I WOULDN'T MESS WITH THEM IF I WERE YOU. THEY ARE **MINDLESS,** BUT **VICIOUS** FIGHTERS.

SKAAAAAuuuGH!

THWAK!

-ER, UH-

COOL DOWN, SON. YOU'VE GOT ME ALL **WRONG**. I JUST GOT HERE MYSELF. NO NEED TO GET **EXCITED**.

THAT'S **ERIX**! MASTER OBEX PROMISED HIM TO **ME**. WHY ARE **YOU** ON HIM?

THE **HORSE**?! NO PROBLEM. I JUST TOOK HIM SO HE WOULDN'T STARVE OUT HERE. I WAS TRYING TO **HELP**.

THUMP!

IT WAS **TOO LATE** TO HELP YOUR MASTER WHEN I GOT HERE. THIS ATROCITY WAS CAUSED BY SOME **RENEGADE OUTLAW ZOMBIES**.

I AM **THUR LON**. I SERVE **LOD PHATUUS** OUT OF FALMOT. ONE OF HIS SLAVES RAN AWAY. I HAVE TO GET HER BACK. I'M YOUR **FRIEND**, TUGAT.

HERE'S YOUR HORSE BACK. **SAY**, YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THAT SLAVE HAVE YOU?

-SLAVE?

YEAH, I THINK YOU **HAVE**! RAN OUT ON YOU, EH? THAT **BITCH** HAS A MIND OF HER OWN.

THIS COULD BE A GREAT **OPPORTUNITY** FOR YOU, TUGAT. IF YOU **HELP** ME CATCH THAT SLAVE, YOU'RE SURE TO BE **HIRED** BY LOD PHATULUS. HE'S ALWAYS LOOKING FOR **GOOD** MEN.

MASTER OBEX SAID FALMOT WAS A **BAD** PLACE.

NO WAY, PAL. **FALMOT** IS A BEAUTIFUL ELEGANT CITY OF DEMOCRACY. IT IS FULL OF **DIVERSE** AND **INTERESTING** PEOPLE. I KNOW YOU WILL LOVE IT THERE. **YOU'LL** FIT RIGHT IN.

BUT I REALLY NEED **HELP** CATCHING THAT SLAVE.

NO! MASTER OBEX TAUGHT ME THAT SLAVERY IS TOTALLY **EVIL.** I CAN NOT HELP YOU.

OF COURSE HE WAS **RIGHT,** BUT YOU'RE MAKING A BIG **MISTAKE.** WELL, **OKAY.** YOU'VE GOT YOUR HORSE. GOOD LUCK.

C'MON, FRIX. WE'VE GOT TO BURY MASTER OBEX.

BY DAWN THE YOUNG MAN HAD COMPLETED THE CREMATION AND BURIAL OF HIS MENTOR. MUCH OF THE GENERAL FOG HAD DISSIPATED BY THEN BUT AS HE LEFT THE MISTS WERE MOVING IN ONCE MORE.

DESPITE WHAT THUR LON SAID, I THINK I WILL **AVOID** FALMOT. MASTER WOULD NOT **LIE** TO ME.

I WONDER WHERE THAT MOJA GIRL WENT.

TUBAT, I'M BACK! DID YOU ESCAPE THAT SLAVER?

SLAVER? NOT THUR LON. HE **HATES** SLAVERY.

WHAT ARE YOU **TALKING** ABOUT?

HE GAVE ME BACK MY HORSE. BUT HE WAS LOOKING FOR YOU. IT'S HIS **JOB**. DON'T WORRY. HE HEADED **SOUTH.**

OH **NO!** YOU **IDIOT!**

WELL, TUGAT! FANCY MEETING YOU HERE.

I DON'T WANT ANY **ARGUMENTS!** THESE ARCHERS ARE DEADLY **ACCURATE.** **YOU**, THE **GIRL**, YOUR **HORSE** ARE THE TARGETS.

I **APPRECIATE** ALL YOUR HELP BUT THERE'S JUST **ONE** MORE LITTLE THING, TUGAT. COULD SLIP THIS AROUND YOUR **NECK?**

PLEASE DON'T HURT FRIX.

DAMN YOU, TUGAT. HE **FOLLOWED** YOU.

YOU GOD-DAMNED **BASTARD** FIENDS!

I WOULD NEVER HURT THE HORSE, TUGAT. HE'S **MINE.**

POOR TUGAT. HE WAS RAISED TO BE RATHER INNOCENT AND SIMPLE, AND HE WOULD TRUST **ANYBODY.** LEARNING THAT **TRUST** HAD TO BE EARNED WAS A HARD LESSON FOR HIM.

A THOUSAND STENCHES ASSAIL THE GLOWERING HEAVENS- BRINE, SCORCHED MEAT, PICKLOCK OIL AND SWEATY FLESH; THE SMELL OF DRYING BLOOD, ROTTING MONEY, AND DECAYING BUILDINGS- INCENSE TO MADDEN THE SENSES.

MURKY WORLD

AFTER THREE DAYS' WALKING IN THE CHOKING DUST OF MURKY WORLD, TUGAT, MOJA AND THEIR CAPTORS REACH THE OMINOUS TOWERS OF **FALMOT.** THERE IS AN AURA OF BROODING FEAR THAT PERVADES THE VERY ATMOSPHERE, AS THE DUSKY GLOW OF TWILIGHT FEEBLY LIT THE PILED STONES.

IF IT WEREN'T FOR **FRIX,** I WOULD HAVE-

OH, HOW YOU TALK!

MAYBE YOU WOULDN'T LOVE THAT HORSE SO MUCH IF YOU HAD TO WALK **BEHIND** IT FOR A FEW MILES.

WHAT? THE ZOMBIES DROPPED OUT.

THE WALKING DEAD ARE **NOT ALLOWED** WITHIN THE CITY WITHOUT A SPECIAL PERMIT.

YOU KEEP CHATTERING, AND I'LL SERVE YOU BOTH WITH **BROKEN NOSES.**

THAT PERSON- I KNOW I'VE SEEN HIM BEFORE.

THE SLAVER YANKS THE CHAINED COLLARS, JERKING THE TWO ACQUISITIONS DEEPER INTO THE SHADOWED ALLEYS. TUGAT WATCHES THE STRANGE INHABITANTS NERVOUSLY.

MANY LEER BACK **MALICIOUSLY** AS THE PROCESSION PASSES BY.

HEY, WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT, **ASSHOLE?**

SOME OF THE CITY'S DENIZENS ARE **FABULOUS** CREATURES THAT THE RUSTIC YOUTH HAS NEVER SEEN BEFORE.

URRGAH!

EH?

THUR LON LED THEM FURTHER THROUGH THE LABYRINTHINE TUNNELS. THE MAZE SEEMED ENDLESS.

BACK THERE. THAT **GIANT** WITH ONE EYE GESTURED TO ME.

I THINK SHE **LIKES** YOU. CAN YOU HANDLE **HER?**

HEY BREK, HAVE YOU SEEN MY BOSS?

HEY LON, YEAH! JUST A COUPLE BLOCKS OVER.

I SEE YOU'VE BROUGHT SOME GOODS BACK. NICE **HORSE.** I MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN **HIM.**

I'M JUST RETURNING THE FEMALE. I'LL BE BACK TO MAKE A DEAL ON THE OTHERS.

TUGAT, YOU STAY HERE AND **BEHAVE** FOR A FEW MINUTES.

LOD PHATUUS BECAME **RICH** AND POWERFUL WHEN HIS CLAN CONQUERED THE NEIGHBORING TRIBES OF **DEKA NATIVES** WHO USED TO TERRORIZE THE EASTERN WILDERNESS. HIS LITTER BEARERS ARE THE **DAUGHTERS** OF DEKAN ROYALTY; HE TAKES GREAT PLEASURE IN TORMENTING THEM.

DADDY, CAN'T WE GO NOW? THIS PLACE STINKS AND I WANT MY **BATH.**

JUST A WHILE LONGER DEAR.

LOD PHATUUS, **SIRE,** I'VE RETURNED WITH THE **RUNAWAY.**

AH, **GOOD MAN.** BUT SHE MAY **NOT** BE SUITABLE FOR US AFTER ALL; TOO **HEADSTRONG,** YOU KNOW...

...AND SHE BROKE MY PORTER'S **LEG** WHEN SHE ESCAPED- I HAD TO PUT HIM **DOWN**. SELL HER TO THE **ARENA**!

YOU LITTLE **WHORE**. YOU'D BETTER SHAPE UP. TELL THE LOD YOU'RE **SORRY** AND YOU'LL BE **GOOD**.

MAYBE A FEW **BEATINGS** WOULD WHIP HER INTO SHAPE.

HEY, YOU FAT TUB OF LARD! YOU AND YOUR UGLY DAUGHTER ARE STABLE SHIT! I'D KICK YOUR BUTTS IF I WEREN'T CHAINED.

KRAK!

GET HER OUT OF HERE, LON. I WANT HER **TORN** TO **SHREDS** AT THE NEXT ARENA DAY.

WOW! GATHER AROUND, FOLKS. COME AND BEHOLD OUR **FREE** DEMONSTRATION OF MARTIAL SKILL. . .

THESE **BATTLING, BUXOM, BIG-BOOBED BABES** ARE THE **BODACIOUS** TWINS, **BODON** AND **GUNO.** THEY'RE BOTH UNDEFEATED, WITH **SIX KILLS** EACH, AND NOW THEY'RE OUT FOR EACH OTHER'S **BLOOD!**

AND DON'T FORGET, AT THE ARENA THEY WON'T BE **ENCUMBERED** BY ANY CONFINING **COSTUMES!**

SNAP!

THEY'RE REALLY HITTING EACH OTHER **HARD!**

WHAK!

THUD!

GREAT THASAIDON! SHE KILLED HER!

PSSST! C'MERE. HELP ME.

I WIN! I AM THE GREATEST FIGHTER!

I CAN BEAT ANYONE! HAUGH! BRING IT ON!

CRASH!

C'MON, BODON!

THANKS, DUDE!

?

YOU! WHY DID YOU OPEN THAT DOOR?

THEY WERE KILLING EACH OTHER!

STOP THEM! THEY'RE TAKING THE HORSE TOO! DAMN IT!

YOU **BASTARD!** THAT'LL COST ME A **FORTUNE.**

WHAK!

GOOD NEWS, BREK. WE WON'T NEED THIS ONE AFTER ALL. I'LL GIVE YOU A **GREAT DEAL** ON HER.

HOW ABOUT A HUNDRED TALONS FOR THE PAIR? **HEY!** WHERE'S MY **HORSE?**

I'LL TAKE THE PAIR, YOU **BUM!** IN COMPENSATION FOR **DAMAGES!**

WHAT TH-

AND IF THE HORSE WASN'T **GONE**, I WOULD TAKE HIM, **TOO.**

THAT ONE LET MY STAR FIGHTERS **ESCAPE!** THE TOWN GUARD **SAW** IT ALL; HE'LL BACK ME UP. SO DON'T GIVE ME ANY **SHIT.**

YOU CAN SEE THESE TWO AGAIN IN A FORTNIGHT -AT THE ARENA!

-OR **BITS** OF THEM.

I'M AFRAID OUR HERO AND HIS GIRLFRIEND HAVE GONE FROM THE **FRYING PAN** INTO THE **FIRE!** LOOKS LIKE HIS ADVENTURES MAY COME TO A BLOODY AND BRUTAL **END** IF THEY DON'T FIGURE SOME WAY OUT OF THIS FIX - WITHIN A **FORTNIGHT.**

LATER AT THE BAREHANDED ARENA-

BREK, THE OWNER OF THE **BAREHANDED** ARENA, WAS WORRIED. THE CELEBRATED FIGHTERS, **GUNO** AND **BODON**, HAD BEEN THE ARENA'S MOST POPULAR ATTRACTION; NONE OF THE OTHER FIGHTERS COULD COME CLOSE TO THEIR **CHARISMA** AND **SKILLS**. THE FATE OF HIS BUSINESS DEPENDED UPON WHETHER HE COULD FIND A SUITABLE REPLACEMENT. **MOJA** WAS A FORMER FIGHTER, BUT HE CONSIDERED HER TOO UNPREDICTABLE. THE **NEW** RECRUIT, HOWEVER, WAS A POSSIBILITY. . .

TOBO, I WANT YOU TO CHECK OUT THE NEW ONE. SEE WHAT HE CAN DO.

HEY, **FOOL!** SHOW ME WHAT YOU GOT. TAKE A **SWING!**

THE **JAW**, YOU IDIOT! YOU **CAN'T** MISS IT.

C'MON, FOOL

WASN'T YOUR MOTHER A **WHORE** IN THE **FLESH SEWERS?**

OWWH!

DAMN YOU!

JUMP!

THIS IS BORING. THE CROWD WON'T PUT UP WITH THAT **CRAP!** I WONDER IF HE WOULD PUT UP A FIGHT AGAINST THE **BEAST.**

COME BACK HERE, YOU **SLUG!**

HOLD IT, TOGO! THE AUDIENCE WOULD TEAR THE PLACE DOWN IF I CHARGED FOR THAT MATCH. I HAVE TO THINK OF SOMETHING.

OKAY, I'VE GOT IT. MOJA AND TUGAT WILL BE MONKEY FODDER FIRST, AND THEN YOU CAN DO HIM. BUT YOU'D BETTER MAKE IT GOOD.

WOW, TUGAT, THAT WAS REALLY COOL. HOW MANY YEARS DID YOU TRAIN AND STUDY TO REACH THAT LEVEL OF MASTERY?

SEE THE BATTLE WITH THE GIANT, MONSTROUS BEAST CAPTURED ON THE DISTANT SOUTHERN CONTINENT OF ZOONDAR, AT GREAT COST OF LIVES AND GOLD. ALREADY EIGHT GLADIATORS HAVE DIED FIGHTING HIM! IN COMBAT TODAY, RIGHT HERE AT THE BARE-HANDED ARENA!

WHAT DO YOU THINK, THUR LON? IS IT WORTH IT?

I'M MORE INTERESTED IN THEIR PLANS FOR THOSE TWO SLAVES.

THERE ISN'T MUCH ENTERTAINMENT IN **FALMOT**, BUT THE ARENA USUALLY PULLS A HUGE CROWD. RUMOR HAS CIRCULATED THAT THE FAVORITE PLAYERS HAVE RUN AWAY. BUT A THRONG HAS GATHERED, CURIOUS TO SEE WHAT NEW **BLOOD** OFFERINGS THERE WOULD BE.

HEY, WHERE'S **GUNO** AND **BODON?**

I CAME TWENTY MILES FOR THIS- IT HAD BETTER BE **GOOD.**

GET READY, FOLKS! WE'VE GOT A **GREAT** SHOW SET UP FOR YOU.

I WANT TO SEE **GUNO!**

FIRST, THE GIANT, MUTANT BABOON, **GHAR GASH**. HE'S **IMPOSSIBLE** TO CONTROL - HE'S KILLED **TWENTY** GLADIATORS IN THE ARENA TO DATE. WILL HE KILL **MORE** TODAY?

HE **DOESN'T** LOOK LIKE A KILLER TO ME!

BOOO!

TOBO, GET THAT MOJA OUT HERE **FAST**. THEY'RE YELLING FOR **BLOOD!**

HERE SHE IS, FOLKS. THE SENSUOUS BUT REBELLIOUS **MOJA!** ONCE A REGULAR PLAYER IN THIS ARENA, RETURNED NOW TO **END** HER CAREER FOR YOUR **AMUSEMENT.**

C'MON!

GET IT **ON!**

BECAUSE OF HER PREVIOUS MARTIAL EXPERIENCE, WE IMPOSE A SLIGHT **HANDICAP.**

DAMN YOU! CAN'T I EVEN KEEP A RAG FOR **MODESTY?**

NO MODESTY **HERE,** DEAR.

NO, NOOO! PLEASE! I'LL FIGHT THE ANIMAL!

SHUT UP! **YOUR** TURN WILL COME.

ONLY BREK'S SLEAZY GANG OF **COWARDS** WOULD CALL THIS TRAVESTY A **'SPORT'.** GIVE ME A **CHAMPION,** OR LET **ME** FIGHT! BUT NOT THAT **TUBAT.**

THE CAGE WAS OPENED AND THE LEERING, SHAGGY MONSTER CREPT FORWARD SLOWLY. THE CROWD BECAME SILENT.

THE MUTANT BEAST WAS UNNATURALLY LARGE, THE **THROWBACK** OF A PREHISTORIC SPECIES.

NICE GHAR GASH. A NICE **FRIENDLY** MONKEY.

GHAR GASH WOULDN'T HURT **MOJA.** MOJA **LIKES** GHAR GASH.

BREATHING HEAVILY, IT APPROACHED... IT CAME SO CLOSE SHE COULD FEEL ITS HOT, FETID EXHALATIONS.

IT CAME CLOSE AND TOOK HOLD OF HER LEG. THEN-

LICK LICK

AH, CRAP!

BOOOOO!

WHAT A **RIP OFF!**

THAT'S NOT A SAVAGE **BABOON.** IT'S A CUDDLY **TEDDY BEAR!**

GOD DAMN IT! TOGO, GET YOUR **BUTT** OUT HERE AND **KILL** THAT **BABOON.**

I WANT MY **MONEY** BACK.

TOGO, GET OUT HERE, **NOW!** WE'RE IN **TROUBLE.**

BOOOOO!!

TOGO!

GET **OUT** OF MY WAY. I'VE GOT TO **KILL** THAT THING!

HEY, DAMNIT!

OUWWH!

OOFF!

STOP, YOU, ARRGH!

THUD!

WHAT TH-

I PAID FOR THIS -?

I'M GETTING MY MONEY BACK!

SON OF A BITCH!

YOU'RE A BUNCH OF CROOKS!

HOLD IT, FOLKS! I'LL TAKE CARE OF THIS!

YOU WANT BLOOD? I'LL GIVE YOU BLOOD!

FIRST I'LL TAKE THESE TWO, THEN I'M GONNA KICK TOGO'S BUTT!

GRRRRRRR!

ARCHERS BACK UP. YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO ... IF NECESSARY.

NO PROBLEM! JUST IF NECESSARY.

THINGS WEREN'T GOING WELL IN THE ARENA. TOGO, BREK'S BEST FIGHTER, DIDN'T COME OUT ON CUE. BREK WOULD **STRAIGHTEN** HIM OUT AFTER HE FINISHED THIS EVENT. THE CROWD WASN'T PLEASED SO FAR, AND BREK HAD TO DO SOMETHING **FAST** - AND IT HAD BETTER BE **GOOD**. FIRST THE **MONKEY**, HE THOUGHT; THEN THE **BITCH**.

BOOO! THIS STINKS!

YOU SCUM!

KRAK!

YELP!

HA, HA, HA! I'M GOING TO **SKIN** YOU ALIVE, THEN **CUT** UP THE PIECES. **BLOOD** IS WHAT THIS AUDIENCE WANTS!

MURKY WORLD

THUD!

AAHH!

BARK! BARK!

GHAR GASH'S REPUTATION AS A KILLER WAS NOT EXAGGERATED; HE WAS ONTO THE MAN IN LESS THAN A **BLINK.**

AAAAH! ARCHERS, **SHOOT** DAMN YOU!

BUT YOU'RE TOO **CLOSE!**

HOW IN HELL? THIS IS AN **IMPOSSIBLE** SHOT!

ARROWS FLEW. ONE WENT PURPOSELY **WIDE** ANOTHER HIT THE **WRONG** TARGET!

THP!

AAAGH! YOU MORONS! I'LL HAVE **YOUR** HIDES!!

THP!

NOW THE ARCHERS KNEW THEIR **OWN** LIVES WERE IN **JEOPARDY.** NO MATTER HOW IMPOSSIBLE, THEY'D **BETTER NOT** FAIL WITH THESE SHOTS, OR ELSE! BUT THE CROWD **LOVED** IT.

WOW! THAT'S GREAT!

WHAT IN **HELL?!!**

DID HE DO THAT ON PURPOSE?

THASAIDON-DAMN YOU! CAN'T YOU HIT THIS DAMNED MONKEY?

MORE ARROWS FLEW. THIS TIME THE SHOTS SEEMED EVEN MORE CONSERVATIVE.

THP!

THP!

THP!

THP!

THIS IS NOT TURNING OUT SO BAD AFTER ALL! HA!

THEN A **LUCKY** SHOT!

THUNK!

YELP!

THE BEAST'S FATE WAS **SEALED** FROM THAT MOMENT. **ALL** THE ARROWS HIT THEIR MARK.

THP!

THP!

THP!

THP!

YELLOW COWARD!

BOOOO!

YOU'RE A **FUNNY** DAMNED **COWARD!** CUT ME LOOSE AND I'LL CRAM THAT KNIFE UP YOUR **ASS!**

THOUGHT THAT WAS **FUNNY**, DID YOU? I'LL SHOW YOU SOMETHING REALLY **FUNNY** WHEN I START HACKING BITS OFF YOU!

C'MON BREK, **YOU PRICK!** AT LEAST CUT HER LOOSE!

HOW DARE YOU?! YOU **BASTARD!**

OKAY! I'LL CUT HER LOOSE!

AND WHEN I FINISH WITH **HER**, I'M GOING TO START CUTTING ON **YOU!**

THWAK!

YOU **WHORE!** I WAS GOING TO GIVE YOU AN EASY DEATH! BUT NOW I'M GOING TO SEE HOW MUCH **BLOOD** AND **FLESH** I CAN GET FROM YOU BEFORE YOU EXPIRE! **HAUGH!!**

MOJA WAS **FAST** AND **AGILE.** HER UNFEMININE HANDS WERE AMAZINGLY **STRONG** FROM A LIFETIME OF **LABOR** AND **GRAPPLING.**

AH-?

DAMN YOU! NONE OF YOUR GODDAMNED **MONKEY TRICKS!**

AAAH-!

IN AN INSTANT BREK'S ARM WAS SECURE.

THUD!

UNNNGH!

AAAAAAGH!!!

ARCHERS! ARCHERS! **SHOOT HER!** SHE'S BREAKING MY **ARM!!!** **AAAAAAUUUUGH!**

I'VE GOT A BETTER SHOT.

THE ARCHER TOOK CAREFUL AIM. HE DIDN'T NOTICE THE **TRAP DOOR** OPENING BEHIND HIM.

DAMN IT! YOU'RE **TOO CLOSE** AGAIN!

I'VE GOT HER- UMPH!

AAAAAA AAH—!!!

KA-THUMPH!

OH GOD! OH GOD! MY ARM! DO SOMETHING!

I'VE GOT IT NOW! JUST DON'T MOVE!

THE ARROW FLEW SILENT AND TRUE.

JUST AS BREK RAISED HIMSELF BACK IN AGONY.

THUNKK!!

OH SHIT! I'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE FAST.

NICE SHOT!

THE CROWD CHEERED AS TUGAT LEAPED INTO THE ARENA.

TUGAT! ARE YOU HERE TO FIGHT ME NOW?

HELL, NO! IT'S TIME TO GO! C'MON!

WHAP!

THE CROWD'S UNUSUAL CHEERING BROUGHT SEVERAL CITY GUARDS TO CHECK AND SEE IF THEY WERE NEEDED.

WHAT THE **HELL'S** GOING ON?

YOU MISSED OUT, PAL. THAT WAS ONE OF THE **BEST** SHOWS I'VE SEEN HERE IN YEARS.

I DON'T KNOW HOW OL' BREK CAN **TOP** THIS ONE. **HA!**

BACK THROUGH HERE! I KNOW A **WAY OUT!**

THEY'RE- **ASLEEP!** THEY ARE ALL TAKING **NAPS!**

WHAT IN HELL HAPPENED TO THIS BUNCH?

DOWN HERE! A TUNNEL WILL TAKE US AWAY FROM THE ARENA.

TERRIFIC!

TUGAT, I THINK THERE ARE UNKNOWN DEPTHS ABOUT YOU.

THIS WAY! IT WILL TAKE US TO THE ALLEY NEAR THE GATE. I **CHECKED** IT OUT EARLIER.

-AND YOU CAME BACK?

SURE. WE'LL JUST WAIT HERE UNTIL IT'S DARK.

WE'LL BE OKAY IF WE JUST STICK TO THE SHADOWS.

WELL, HELLO AGAIN, GANG. I KNEW YOU'D **FINALLY** SHOW UP!

JUST COME WITH ME. I HAVE A GREAT **OPPORTUNITY** FOR YOU. IT'S WHAT I HAD IN MIND ALL ALONG, BUT YOU GOT TANGLED UP WITH THAT DAMNED OPEN-HANDED ARENA GANG. YOU'RE GOING TO **LOVE** IT.

BUT WILL THEY REALLY LOVE IT? I KEEP THINKING TUGAT WILL GET HIMSELF OUT OF THESE CONTINUOUS MESSES, BUT THEN HE FINDS HIMSELF BOGGED DOWN EVEN MORE. WELL, WE'LL SEE WHAT HE'S GOTTEN HIMSELF INTO THIS TIME. . .

IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE CAUGHT UP WITH THAT WOULD-BE ADVENTURER, **TUBAT.** I HAVE SPECIAL WAYS TO FIND OUT WHAT HE'S BEEN UP TO, BUT I LIKE TO CHECK IN AND GET **HIS** POINT OF VIEW. HE'LL BE ALONG HERE SOON.

YES, THERE HE COMES.

HEY, TUBAT! WHY ARE YOU WALKING ALONE HERE, IN THIS **STRANGE** LAND? YOU REMEMBER **ME,** DON'T YOU? HOW ARE YOU?

WHAT THE- YOU'RE THAT OLD WOMAN FROM MY **DREAM!** YOU ARE THE ONE THAT SENT ME ON THIS **FOOL'S ERRAND.** EVEN NOW, I DON'T KNOW WHY I CAME TO JOURNEY IN THIS **WEIRD** LAND OF DENSE **ATMOSPHERES...** IN THIS-

MURKY WORLD

STOP AND **REST** AWHILE. TELL ME WHY YOU ARE TRAVELING IN REMOTE AND LONELY **ZODAN.** I'M AFRAID THERE'S NOT ENOUGH BRUSH HERE FOR A **CAMPFIRE,** THOUGH.

NO CAMP-FIRE!

I WAS TAKEN THERE AS A **SLAVE,** WITH **MOJA.** I HAD TO FIND A WAY TO ESCAPE WITH HER. I WANTED HER TO **LIKE** ME BUT SHE **BLAMED** ME FOR CAUSING US TO GET CAPTURED.

THAT'S OKAY. **WE** WON'T NEED IT. NOW, I HEARD YOU WERE IN THAT **SMELLY FALMOT** IN THE **ARENA,** OF ALL THINGS. HOW DID YOU GET **AWAY** FROM **THAT?**

PHATUUS IS A POWER-FUL **WARLORD.** HE AND HIS DAUGHTER **HOBIA** WERE THE SOLE **MASTERS** OF GRAYGRIN.

WE WERE TAKEN TO **GRAYGRIN** THE ESTATE OF **LOD PHATUUS.** I **NEVER** SAW MOJA AFTER THAT. THUR LON **SAID** SHE WAS QUARTERED IN THE FEMALES' WING OF THE MANSION. HE ASSURED ME I **WOULD** SEE HER ON A REGULAR BASIS.

WE DID **ESCAPE,** BUT THAT DAMNED **THUR LON** CAUGHT US **AGAIN.** I WOULD HAVE **CHALLENGED** HIM THEN, BUT HE HAD SOME **CONTROL** OVER HER.

PHATUUS IS A **BRUTAL APE.** HE USES A GANG OF THUGS HE CALLS HIS **"STAFF"** TO RULE AND HOLD CONTROL OF HIS **STOLEN** ESTATE AND TREASURES.

CALM YOURSELF TUGAT. HAVE SOME **NUTS** AND **DATES.**

THUR LON SAID **I** WAS TO JOIN THE **"STAFF"** BECAUSE OF MY LATENT MARTIAL SKILLS. MY **SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT** WAS TO BE HOBIA'S **BODYGUARD.** I WASN'T **WELCOMED.**

BRUTAG, THE CAPTAIN, EXPLAINED:

TUGAT, YOU WILL HAVE TO BE TRAINED TO A **EXTREME** LEVEL OF **SUBMISSION.** THERE WILL BE **BEATINGS** AND **MORE** FOR OUR **"SPECIAL"** RECRUIT.

HE SAID I WOULD SOON **LONG** FOR MY **DEATH.** I DIDN'T-

-I LONGED FOR **HIS.**

STANDING GUARD DUTY WAS A RELIEF FROM THE **"TRAINING SESSIONS."** I WONDERED IF MOJA HAD SOMEHOW ESCAPED ON HER **OWN.**

I HEARD CRYING.

IT WAS DISTANTLY FAMILIAR.

IT WAS TWO **DEKAN PRINCESSES**, NOW ENSLAVED. MY MENTOR MASTER OBEX HAD BEEN **CLOSE FRIENDS** OF THE DEKAN TRIBES. **ONE** SEEMED TO REMEMBER ME. I HAD TO DO **SOMETHING.**

MISTRESS HOBIA!

GUARD! WHERE'S THAT **SOW** THAT MADE THIS **BLOODY MESS?**

I'LL SEARCH!

LOOKS LIKE SHE **MISCAR-RIED!** UGH!

THE DEKAN GESTURED IN SIGN LANGUAGE OF HER **DISPAIR.**

SHE WANTED ME TO **KILL** HER, TO END HER **ENSLAVEMENT.**

I SIGNED BACK FOR HER TO GET HER **COMRADES** AND MEET ME AT THE **STABLES.**

MY **FAMOUS** GENERAL FATHER JUST **HAD** TO BRING THOSE DAMNED **GIANT** CAPTIVES HOME SO THAT HE COULD **IMPRESS** HIS ARISTO FRIENDS IN FALMOT. AFTER THIS IS CLEANED UP I'M **NOT ALLOWING** THOSE SOWS TO EVEN COME IN HERE.

YOU WERE JUST **BEATING** ONE?

JUST BECAUSE THEY'RE **GIANTS**, HE THINKS HE'S A **GIANT** FOR DEFEATING THEM IN A **ONE-SIDDED** BATTLE. I THINK THEY ARE **DISGUSTING**, WALKING AROUND **NAKED!** I MAY JUST HAVE CAPTAIN BRUTAG GET **RID** OF THEM WITHOUT TELLING FATHER.

UH, I'M **SORRY**, MISTRESS. THE YELLOW ONE DIED.

IT'S ALL YOU LOWER **CREATURES** UNDERSTAND, ISN'T IT! DO AS I SAID -- **NOW!**

THASAIDON, **DAMN IT!** I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN. **YOU**, FETCH SOMEONE ELSE TO CLEAN UP THIS MESS. I'LL HAVE CAPTAIN BRUTAG GIVE **YOU** A BEATING.

THAT DAMNED RECRUIT! **WHAT'S** HE UP TO?

I WASTED NO TIME. I HARNESSED THE **TWO BEST HORSES** TO A WAGON.

THE DEKAN PRINCESS SIGNED HER **GRATITUDE**. I RETURNED THAT SHE **GO** TO HER PEOPLE **WITHOUT DELAY.**

JUST THEN CAPTAIN BRUTAG STAGGERED UP, **DRUNK** AND SWEARING.

DAMN YOU! FREEING **SLAVES**, EH?

SOME TECHNIQUES THAT I LEARNED FROM MASTER OBEX SHOULD **ONLY** BE USED IN **RARE** SITUATIONS. THE **BEX THROAT GRIP** WORKED FASTER THAN A HEARTBEAT.

I **REGRET** KILLING THE BRUTE NOW. I WISH I HAD USED THE **SLEEPER TWIST** INSTEAD. THE FREED DEKANS FLED NORTH. I WAITED, TO DELAY ANY PURSUIT.

I WENT WEST, HOPING THAT LOD PHATUUS WOULD BE MORE ANGRY ABOUT HIS **MURDERED CAPTAIN** THAN THE **STOLEN HORSES.**

AFTER THREE DAYS I TURNED MY PATH **SOUTH** TOWARD ANCIENT **ZODAN.** THE NATIVE RACE OF SHEPHERDS HAVE **NO SPEECH** BUT I LEARNED THROUGH THEIR OWN **SIGN LANGUAGE** THAT A DARK-HAIRED WOMAN HAD COME THIS WAY RECENTLY, WITH THREE COMPANIONS, ON HORSEBACK.

THEY ENTERED THE SHUNNED KINGDOM OF ZEDON ABANDONED HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO.

IT IS SAID TO BE INHABITED BY ONLY **DEMONIC SCAVENGERS** AND **GIANT SPIDERS.**

OBVIOUSLY THE PLACE MOJA WOULD GO.

BUT **WHO** WERE THE THREE **COMPANIONS?**

EVEN AS I PENETRATED THIS LONELY LAND, I SAW THAT I WAS BEING **FOLLOWED.**

YOU ARE **RIGHT** ABOUT THAT, TUGAT. BUT I AM SURE I CAN **ENLIGHTEN** YOU ABOUT SEVERAL THINGS YOU DON'T KNOW.

AND **FIRST**, THERE IS SOME-THING YOU CAN **HELP** ME WITH.

LOD PHATUUS **IS** AFTER YOU BUT **NOT** BECAUSE OF HIS SLAIN CAPTAIN. **AND** THERE ARE SOME DEVIOUS PLANS NOW WORKING AGAINST YOU. COME **CLOSER**; LET'S **TALK** ABOUT IT.

I REALLY DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THAT.

THIS WAS THE LAND OF THE **CLUDITES**, RELIGIOUS ZEALOTS WHO DEALT RUTHLESSLY WITH NONBELIEVERS. THEY STAKED THIS ONE OUT FOR THE **PARASITIC BLOOD ROOTS**.

YOU TWO, **GET** BACK UP HERE!

WE'RE CLOSING IN ON THAT DAMNED **KIDNAPPER**. HE POSED AS A GUARD RECRUIT, THEN TOOK MY DAUGHTER WITHOUT WARNING. THE **FIEND** WILL WANT TO BARGAIN WHEN WE CATCH HIM.

WE'LL GIVE HIM **WHATEVER** HE WANTS-

-UNTIL **HOBIA** IS RETURNED SAFELY.

THEN HE WILL DEARLY **REGRET** HIS CRIME.

THE RESCUE PARTY MOVED ANXIOUSLY THROUGH THE BLEAK DESERT, STREWN WITH OLD MUMMIES AND BONES. BUT THEY DIDN'T NOTICE A FEW MORE **RECENT** HUMAN FRAGMENTS, EVIDENCE OF UNKNOWN **ATROCITIES**. SUCH SITES ARE NOT UNKNOWN IN-

MIRKY WORLD

HEY! THE HORSES HAVE CAUGHT SCENT OF **SOMETHING** THEY DON'T LIKE!

WHOA!!

LOOK! WEAPONS AND GEAR OF THE **MUGAR** REBELS! ARE **THEY** BEHIND THIS KIDNAPPING OF LOD PHATUUS' DAUGHTER?

YES! BUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?

I SMELL SOMETHING **MUSTY**; SOMETHING **EVIL** IS NEARBY. HOBIA IS IN **GREAT DANGER**. WE MUST CONTINUE ON FOOT, WITHOUT DELAY.

LEAVING ONE GUARD BEHIND TO CONTROL THE NERVOUS STEEDS, THE ELITE GUARDS FOLLOWED THE RESOLUTE LOD TOWARD AN ANCIENT AND OMINOUS **ARACA TREE**. THE TENSE ATMOSPHERE SEEMED THICK AND PALPABLE AS THEY STAGGERED FORWARD.

OH GREAT **THASAIDON!** I SEE A VICTIM TETHERED TO THAT MAMMOTH TREE. CAN IT BE-

-HOBIA!

CAPTAIN! YOU AND YOUR MEN **AVERT** YOUR EYES. NO COMMON, LOWER-CASTE OAFS WILL BE ALLOWED TO VIEW MY DAUGHTER'S **NAKED BODY!** I WILL FREE HER.

THE GUARD WAS AMAZED AT THE RESCUER'S UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR.

WHAT IN THE **HELL** IS GOING ON UP THERE?

DAMN YOU, **LECHERS!** TURN AND LOOK AT THE GROUND. I'LL **CASTRATE** ANY CREEP SNEAKING A **PEEK** IN THIS DIRECTION!

HOBIA, DEAR, I'LL HAVE YOU LOOSE AND **COVERED UP** IN JUST A MOMENT- **WHA-?**

BUT, LOD PHATUUS, THE SITUATION IS **DANGEROUS.** WE MUST STAY ALERT FOR THREATS FROM **ANY** DIRECTION.

DON'T YOU **DARE** DISOBEY ME, CAPTAIN **PIG!** TURN AROUND! THAT'S AN **ORDER!!**

MEMBERS OF ROYAL BLOOD HAVE **NEVER** BEEN **VOLUPTUOUS!** **LEAST** OF ALL MY DAUGHTER, HOBIA!!

GOD DAMN IT! **YOU'RE** NOT HOBIA! YOU'RE THAT DAMNED GUTTER-SCUM SOW, **MOJA!**

TALK, YOU **BITCH!** WHERE'S MY DAUGHTER, YOUR ROYAL MISTRESS?

PLEASE, LOD PHATUUS. HAVE **MERCY!** I AM INNOCENT!

A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY, THE LONE GUARD IS ABRUPTLY OVERCOME WITH A **STRANGE** SLEEPINESS.

UUNNNGH-

OH GOD!

SUDDENLY, AN OVERPOWERING MUSTY **STENCH** BELCHES OVER THE WAITING SOLDIERS. STARTLED, THEY TURN AROUND DESPITE THE ORDER.

TUGAT ALWAYS HAD AN **UNCANNY** WAY WITH ANIMALS. LOD PHATUUS' PALE STEED QUICKLY **CALMED**, AND ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE MOUNTED AND URGED TO **CHARGE**.

A NIGHTMARE TORE INTO THE PETRIFIED SOLDIERS.

NOOH!

AAAAAAHHH!!

ARRRGH!!

WAAAH!

IK-!!

COURAGE, YOU TWO! WE'LL MAKE IT. QUICK! CLIMB ON.

WHERE'D YOU-?

HURRY!

TWIAK!!

HACK!

THAT'S MY HORSE!

YOU! YOU'RE THE KIDNAPPER OF MY HOBIA!

ARE YOU CRAZY?

YAAAH!

AWWWRGH!

THE MAMMOTH ARACHNOID BEAST **MASTICATED** THE HAPLESS MEN AND CARRIED **TASTY BITS** BACK TO ITS LAIR.

WHY DIDN'T YOU **KILL** THE MONSTER?

I MAY NOT BE HIGHLY EDUCATED, LOD PHATULUS, BUT I'M NOT **STUPID.**

WE MUST LET THE HORSE REST NOW.

MY HORSE!

MOJA, I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS **YOU** TIED TO THE TREE.

TUGAT!

ALL RIGHT, **KIDNAPPER,** WHERE IS HOBIA? TELL ME **ALL** NOW, AND I **MIGHT** SPARE YOUR LIFE. IF YOU **PERSIST** IN YOUR HEINOUS CRIME, YOU WILL WISH YOU HAD NEVER BEEN BORN.

DO I MAKE MYSELF **CLEAR?**

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IN **HELL** YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT, YOU OLD **FOOL.**

WAIT, TUGAT. WE SHOULD **HELP** THE LOD PHATULUS. IT IS OUR **DUTY.**

WE WANT TO **HELP** YOU RESCUE YOUR ROYAL DAUGHTER, SIRE. I KNOW WHERE THE KIDNAPPERS HAVE TAKEN HER. I CAN **LEAD** YOU THERE, AND TUGAT WILL **SERVE** YOU.

WHAT?

WON'T YOU, TUGAT?!

TUGAT IS **ASTONISHED** AT MOJA'S APPARENT CHANGE OF ATTITUDE, AS SHE EXPLAINS HOW SHE, TOO, WAS KIDNAPPED. FORMERLY SHE HAD **DESPISED** THE LOD AND THE RULING CLASS. NOW SHE SEEMS DETERMINED TO ACCOMMODATE HIS WISHES.

MANY TWISTS AND TURNS TO COME AS THE PLOT CONTINUES TO THICKEN.

LOD PHATUUS, YOUR LAST GUARD HAS **LEFT.** I WAS ABLE TO CATCH TWO **HORSES** THOUGH.

THAT **BASTARD.** HE'LL **REGRET** ABANDONING US IF I CATCH HIM.

THE **ORIGINAL** PLANS MUST HAVE BEEN REVISED.

YOU TWO STILL **OWE** ME SERVICE! WE MUST NOW FIND MY **DAUGHTER.**

"SERVICE"?

WE **MUST** DO AS HE SAYS, TUGAT. IT WILL BE **WORTH** IT!

I GUESS I OWE HIM **SOMETHING** FOR **KILLING** HIS CAPTAIN.

THAT'S THE SPIRIT!

MOJA LED THE SMALL BAND NORTH, INTO **NAUGHTON**, THE LAND OF **TOWERS.** SHE SEEMED SURPRISINGLY **SURE** OF THEIR DIRECTION - ALMOST AS IF SHE WERE IN ON THE PLOT, SOMEHOW. THE PATH MEANDERED THROUGH STRANGE, RUGGED COUNTRY,INFESTED WITH UNFAMILIAR, CARNIVOROUS LOWER SPECIES. **NECROMANCY** USED TO BE COMMON AMONG THE EXTINCT SORCERERS THERE.THEY WILL FIND ALL THIS AND MORE IN THIS CONDEMNED FRAGMENT OF -

MURKY WORLD

TUGAT SEEMED NERVOUS AS THE TRIO ADVANCED INTO **INHOSPITABLE** TERRITORY.

WHAT'S THE **MATTER**, TUGAT?

MY MASTER OBEX TOLD ME SOMETHING OF THE FORBIDDEN LAND OF NAUGHTON. IT WAS A **SONG** OR **MOTTO** -

-"ONLY **FOOLS** TREAD THE SOFT SANDS OF NAUGHTON, WHERE FORGOTTEN TOWERS LURCH AND THE EARTH IS HUNGRY."

CATCHY! NOW, TUGAT, YOU'RE NOT TURNING INTO A **SISSY** ON US, ARE YOU?

TUGAT SET ASIDE HIS **ANXIETY**, BUT AFTER A WEEK OF RELENTLESS PLODDING, THE **SINISTER** AURA OF THEIR ENVIRONMENT COULD **NOT** BE IGNORED.

STOP! LOOK, THERE'S SOME KIND OF RUNIC **WRITING** ON THAT MARKER.

"WELCOME TO OUR **FRIENDLY** COUNTRY!"

NO! IT IS A **WARNING!**

I THINK IT IS A **GREETING.**

SHUT UP, YOU TWO!

THAT DOORWAY LOOKS SINISTER. IS THIS THE KIDNAPPER'S **LAIR?**

MOJA, COULD YOU LOOK FOR A SIDE ENTRANCE?

THASAIDON, **DAMN IT!** THAT'S **NOT** THE MUGAR CAPTAIN. SOMETHING'S GONE **WRONG!**

IT'S YOUR PA, AND THAT **DAMNED** TUGAT AND MOJA.

YOU SAID THE **SPIDER** WOULD GET THEM.

SHE MUST HAVE **LED** THEM HERE, BUT **WHY?** FOR **ME** TO TAKE CARE OF, I GUESS.

YOU **FOOL!** YOUR REBEL FRIENDS MUST HAVE TAKEN THE GOLD FOR **THEMSELVES.** SUCH **LOVELY** PLANS! YOU **SAID** WE'D BE LIVING IT UP ON THE OLD MAN'S GOLD BY NOW.

MY BIG MISTAKE WAS GETTING **INVOLVED** WITH A **SPOILED BRAT.**

ASSHOLE!

WHAT IN **HELL** DOES IT SAY?

IT MEANS "**DANGER**"!

HOW'D YOU GET "**DANGER**" FROM **THAT?** IT'S JUST THE **NAME** OF THE FORMER OWNER.

IT SAYS, "**WAIT**," "**GATE**," SOMETHING, "**STAY**," "**ALWAYS**."

WHERE ARE THEY?

YOU, GET UPSTAIRS AND CHECK IT OUT. **I'LL** BE RIGHT **BEHIND** YOU.

WHY AM I HERE? BECAUSE MOJA WANTS ME TO HELP THAT OLD TYRANT-

-SO I WILL

BUT I HOPE SHE'S BEGINNING TO WARM UP TO ME. WHAT'S THAT?

SLICE!

WE MEET AGAIN, TUGAT. WE SHOULD COME TO AN UNDERSTANDING.

WHIP

WHIP

WHIP

WHIP

WHIP

THUD!

UNNGH!

BIFF!!

WHACK!

OWW!!

SO IT COMES DOWN TO A FIST FIGHT, EH?

CRUNCH!

NO BACK ENTRANCE, BUT I COULD PROBABLY GET UP **THIS** WAY.

SOUNDS LIKE HE RAN INTO THE **KIDNAPPERS.**

BRRR!

OOWW!!

TWAK!

SOCK!

AUGH! DAMN IT!

OKAY TUGAT, PREPARE TO HAVE YOUR BUTT **KICKED!**

I KNOW YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF FANCY MOVES YOUR MASTER TAUGHT YOU- BUT I USED TO FIGHT IN THE ARENA, **TOO.**

BY THE WAY, I KILLED YOUR **STUPID** MASTER.

IT LOOKS LIKE A **SHOWDOWN** BETWEEN TUGAT AND THUR LON, AND **WHAT** COULD MOJA BE UP TO THAT OUR TRUSTING HERO DOESN'T **KNOW** ABOUT?

MORE VIOLENT PUNCHING AND KICKING IN STORE NEXT TIME RIGHT HERE. DON'T MISS IT.

I'M GOING TO **RIP OFF** YOUR ASS-HOLE AND **CRAM** IT DOWN YOUR **THROAT**, YOU **PRICK!!**

MURKY WORLD

-IS A WORLD OF **DIVERSE** AND **OBSCURE** TABLEAUS, AND MANY **BIZARRE** AND **DEVIOUS** CHARACTERS WITH **HIDDEN** AND **DISGUISED** MOTIVATIONS.

IN THE PRECARIOUS TOP LEVEL IN A DESERTED TOWER, LOCATED FAR AWAY IN DISTANT SANDY NAUGHTON, **TUBAT** HAS BEEN SURPRISED BY THE UNEXPECTED MEETING OF HIS OLD FRIEND **THUR LON.** AFTER THE USUAL GREETINGS THEY RESUME THEIR OLD DISCUSSIONS AND DEBATES ABOUT THEIR **ANCESTORS**, BUT NOW **ESCALATED** TO NEW HEIGHTS OF ARGUMENT.

YOU- YOU **KILLED** MY MASTER OBEX, BUT **WHY?**

-CAUSE OOWWH!

BONK!

WHY?!!

KRAK!

CAU-ENH!!

SMAK!

-CAUSE I **FELT** LIKE IT, YOU BASTARD!

AAANNNGGHH!!

YOU DIDN'T **HAVE** TO KILL MASTER OBEX!

OHHH **STOP!** YOU'RE BREAKING MY **ARM!**

AAAAUUGGH!!!

BONK!

OH GREAT **THASAIDON!** MY ARM! I'LL **NEVER** BE ABLE TO USE IT **AGAIN!**

IT WAS JUST A LUCKY THING I WAS THERE TO **SAVE** YOUR ASS!

HE'LL NEVER MESS WITH **ME** AGAIN! **OUT** HE GOES!

TOO BAD! NICE **BUTT!**

WHAT'S GOING ON **HERE?** WERE YOU TWO **TOGETHER** ON THIS PLOT?

LOD PHATUUS!

DADDY!

DADDY, THAT WAS THE **KIDNAPPER** WE JUST THREW OUT THE WINDOW. WE'RE SO **GLAD** YOU CAME!

YES, MY LORD. **I** JUST GOT HERE IN TIME TO **THWART** THE VILLAIN'S **EVIL PLOT.** HE WAS GOING TO **KILL** YOUR NOBLE DAUGHTER AND TAKE YOUR **GOLD!** YOU SAW WE JUST **EXPELLED** THE THREAT. **HIS** KIDNAPPING DAYS ARE **OVER.**

FOR A MOMENT I WAS AFRAID **YOU** WERE THE **MASTERMIND** OF THE WHOLE INSIDIOUS PLAN **YOURSELF.** BUT I SEE **NOW** YOU WERE JUST TRYING TO **RESCUE** HOBIA ALONE. YOU HAVE MY **GRATITUDE,** THURLON. I CAN BE **GENEROUS.**

LOOKS LIKE THE FIEND IS STILL **HUNG UP** OUT HERE.

HE WON'T LAST LONG THOUGH. MAYBE WE'LL SEE HIM **FALL.**

COOL!

TUGAT CLUNG PRECARIOUSLY TO THE LOOSE STONEWORK. HIS HEAD ACHED. EVERYTHING SEEMED TO BE SPINNING. HE CLAMPED HIS EYES SHUT TIGHT AND **PULLED HIMSELF UP.**

BUT IT WAS HARD TO TELL **WHICH WAY WAS UP.**

HEY, PIGBOY!

TUGAT, WE'RE **DOWN HERE!** LOOK AROUND! WE'RE **TALKING** TO YOU, YOU UNGRATEFUL SLAVE!

I WANT YOU TO LET GO, **PIGBOY!**

YOU WERE A **WORTHLESS** GUARD! DO **ONE** THING AS WE ASK.

I AM **STILL** YOUR **MISTRESS** AND YOU OWE ME YOUR **SERVITUDE.** I **COMMAND** YOU TO **LET GO** AND **FALL**

YOU COULD DO US ONE **LAST SERVICE.** WE'D ALL LIKE TO SEE YOU **SPLATTER** AT OUR FEET.

IT'S NOT **HARD**, YOU **FOOL**. DO AS I SAY! **DROP!!**

SSSSSSSSSSSSSSS--

SSSSGGGRRROOOOWWRRRGGGHH!!!!

EEEEEEEEEEIII-
IAAAHH!!!!

GGGGGRRROOOOWWWHH!!

W-WHAT WAS IT?

ALL TIME SEEMED PETRIFIED. THE MISTS DRIFTED SLOWLY, EVER SLOWLY.

THEY'RE **ALL** DEAD.

ALL ARE **DEAD.** SHOULD I **ALSO** DIE?

JUST LET ...

TUGAT! WHAT IN THE HELL ARE YOU DOING DOWN **THERE?**

MOJA! YOU'RE OKAY! **THANK THASAIDON!** COULD YOU **HELP ME?**

HELP **YOU?** WHY **SURE,** YOU **BIG GALOOT.** **WAIT** A MINUTE. HOW **DID** YOU GET DOWN THERE?

THUR LON AND HOBIA **THREW** ME OUT HERE. THE WHOLE KIDNAPPING SCHEME WAS **THEIR** DOING. I THINK THERE'S A **ROPE** IN THERE, MOJA. IF YOU COULD **JUST-**

BUT IF I **HELPED** YOU, TUGAT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO HAVE **SEX,** OR SOMETHING. **YUUCK!!** ON THE **OTHER** HAND, IF THUR LON **PUT** YOU OUT THERE, HE **MUST** HAVE HAD A **GOOD** REASON.

MOJA!

I'M **SORRY**, TUGAT. I KNEW ALL ABOUT THE **SCAM**. THUR LON **AND I** WILL BE VERY **RICH** WHEN **THIS** IS ALL SETTLED.

BUT MOJA, HOW **COULD** YOU GO WITH THUR LON? HE **BEAT** YOU!

I **HATE** TO TELL YOU THIS, TUGAT. BUT I'D RATHER BE BEATEN BY THUR LON THAN FUCKED BY YOU. **SORRY.**

WELL, I'LL BE LEAVING NOW. SHOULD I LEAVE A **HORSE** FOR YOU?

OH! OF COURSE, I FORGOT. SILLY ME. YOU **WON'T** BE NEEDING A HORSE.

WAIT, MOJA! YOU CAN'T GO. THEY'RE ALL **DEAD!**

I DIDN'T **QUITE** HEAR THAT, TUGAT. YOU WERE PROBABLY JUST **MOANING** A BUNCH OF **CRAP** ABOUT HOW YOU LOVE ME. ALL I KNOW IS, I'VE GOT A LOAD OF **GOLD** HERE AND I'M **LEAVING.**

BYE, BYE!

HOURS PASS AS THE MURKY MISTS FLOW SLOWLY THROUGH NAUGHTON.

DID TUGAT **FALL?** OR DID HE THINK OF A WAY TO GET OUT OF HIS PREDICAMENT. I TRIED TO **TELL** HIM ABOUT THOSE PRETTY YOUNG GIRLS BUT HE **WOULDN'T** LISTEN.

THE END? OR WILL THERE BE **MORE?**

TUGAT'S THOUGHTS RAN DESPERATELY THROUGH A **KALEIDOSCOPE** OF THE DIVERSE EVENTS THAT HAD BROUGHT HIS BATTERED CARCASS TO THIS PREDICAMENT. HE FELT MORE **SURPRISE** THAN I DID THAT HE HAD SURVIVED SO MANY TRIALS. BUT HIS DESTINY HELD MANY MORE **ORDEALS** FOR HIM TO FACE IN THIS -

MURKY WORLD

MOJA FEELS **NOTHING** FOR ME.

WHAT DOES IT MATTER WHETHER I **LIVE** OR **DIE**?

IT LOOKS AS THOUGH MY DEATH IS **NEAR**.

WHAT'S CAUSING THAT OMINOUS **VIBRATION**?

SOMETHING IS MOVING BELOW. SOMETHING **UNDERGROUND**!

IT'S THAT **MONSTROUS** SAND WORM, **SMASHING** THE FOUNDATION!

IF I'M GOING TO **DO** SOMETHING, IT HAD BETTER BE **FAST**!

THE SUBTERRANEAN CREATURE CONTINUED TO **GNAW** THE CRUMBLING STONES.

KKRRUUUNNCH!!

AAAAH!

OOF!

AFTER SOME **FRANTIC** STRUGGLING, HE FOUND HIMSELF ON THE GROUND, SCRAMBLING TO **SAFETY.**

I **MADE** IT! I GOT AWAY FROM THAT HORRIBLE BEAST. SO **NOW** WHAT?

HOURS LATER, HIS RESERVES SPENT, THE ADVENTURER FINALLY SANK INTO AN INERT PILE. THERE HE LAY FOR ANOTHER HOUR.

HEY, I THINK IT'S **MY** TURN TO RIDE AWHILE. WHAT'S **THAT?** A BODY?

DEAD?

NO. BUT HE SOON **WILL** BE.

HE LOOKS **FAMILIAR.** C'MON.

ISN'T HE THE MAN WHO **UNLOCKED** THE CAGE BACK IN **FALMOT?**

WE DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO **THANK** HIM. TOO BAD.

HE **LOOKS** LIKE A FIGHTER.

I COULD TAKE HIM THOUGH.

HEY WHAT IF WE-

GUNO! BEHAVE YOURSELF!

EEEAA-AE. AE-AE-AE!

WHAT'S THE **MATTER** WITH HORSE?

GET **BACK,** GIRL!

PULL 'ER **BACK!** SHE'S GONE **CRAZY!**

C'MON! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.

CRAZY HORSE!

FRIX, MY OLD PAL.

HIYAAAAH!!!

I'LL FIND FRIX **AGAIN.** WE'LL BE **REJOINED.**

I THINK IF TUGAT IS GOING TO PULL THROUGH THIS, HE'S GOING TO NEED SOME **HELP.**

WEEKS LATER, NOT TOO FAR AWAY, DOMESTIC ACTIVITY CONTINUES UNDER A HOT SUN. THE WORKERS ARE USED TO THE HEAT AND DO THEIR CHORES AS NORMAL.

THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP

LITTLE JOBS AND ERRANDS KEEP THEM **BUSY**, BUT UNHURRIED.

IT IS JUST **LOXON** AND **DORAH**. THEY WORK TO SERVE THEIR **MASTER**.

BUMP

TRAVELERS ARE **RARE**, BUT THEY SHOW WHAT HOSPITALITY THEY CAN WHEN ONE STOPS BY.

WHAT'S **THIS? SAND?!**

I **SEE.** TAKE ME TO YOUR **MASTER.**

PARDON ME, SIR. I AM A TRAVELER AND I HOPE YOU WILL GRANT ME A DRINK OF WATER AND A SMALL-

NEVER MIND.

YOU ARE JUST A SORCERER, USING YOUR SLAVES **BEYOND** THEIR LIFE SPANS. AN ULTIMATELY **CRUEL** PRACTICE.

TIME FOR THIS TO **END**, NOW.

YOU TWO - I CAN'T RESTORE YOUR LOST LIVES, BUT YOUR SERVICE IS OVER.

I HOPE YOU CAN FIND-

-PEACE.

DAMNED SORCERER!

OUR BOY HAS HIMSELF UNTANGLED FROM ALL HIS **ANNOYING** COMMITMENTS-

-BUT **ONE**. HE REMEMBERS THE TWO AMAZONS WHO TOOK HIS **HORSE**.

FRIX WAS NOT A POSSESSION, BUT HIS **FRIEND**.

TUGAT STRUGGLES FORWARD AS WINDS MOAN THROUGH THE TOWERING MONOLITHS AND SINISTER SIGNS OF BATTLE IN **REMOTE** NAUGHTON, AN OBSCURE LOCATION IN-

FRIX!

MURKY WORLD

FRIX!

WHERE ARE YOU, GIRL?

FRIX, COME! TUGAT HAS A NICE **CARROT** FOR YOU!

STRANGERS IN NAUGHTON? THIS IS **NOT** GOOD.

DEADLINGS!

-IK!!

THUD!

EH?

CHOP!

THWAK!

-AAH!

HOLY-!

CHOMP!

THAT WAS DAMNED **CLOSE!** WHO ARE **YOU?**

I AM **GUNO!** DON'T YOU **REMEMBER** ME?

WHAT? WAIT A MINUTE. AREN'T YOU ONE OF THE **GLADIATORS** THAT **STOLE** FRIX?

IF YOU WOULD HAVE YOUR HORSE BACK, **FOLLOW** ME.

IT WAS STOLEN BY **SORBOF'S** DEAD WARRIORS. MY IMPETUOUS SISTER TRIED TO RETRIEVE IT.

SORBOF! IS HE ONE OF THOSE DAMNED **NECROMANCERS?**

BODON.

ENOUGH!

I MUST INTERROGATE THE NEW ONE-

-TO COLLATE ITS TALENTS, ARE YOU A DANCER? DANCE NOW!

NO? GO FETCH ME A DRINK! NOW!!

VERY WELL. SWEEP UP THE FLOOR!

SORGOF'S ABODE. THERE'S YOUR HORSE. THE DEADLINGS WILL EAT IT.

DAMN IT! NOW WHAT?

FRONTAL ASSAULT! THERE ARE ONLY FIVE!

ARE YOU KIDDING? FIVE AGAINST ONE AND A WOMAN?

SCARED?

DEADLINGS! PREPARE FOR OBLIVION!

SHUT UP, YOU FOOL!

GRRR!

OH CRAP!

THOK!

THWAK!

WHERE'D SHE GO?

EEERG!!

KEEP THEM BUSY! I'LL BE BACK IN A **MINUTE.**

DAMN HER!

NEVER-

-TRUST-

- A WOMAN!

OH, **OUCH!!**

C'MON, FRIX. LET'S GET **OUT** OF HERE.

ON SECOND THOUGHT, THAT MORON HAS SOME **EXPLAINING** TO DO.

GUNO!

K-BUMP!

OWH!

OOOF!!

WHAT? TWO MORE?

YOU'VE MET MY NEW HEAD OF **SECURITY**. I THINK SHE MIGHT HAVE **OTHER** TALENTS.

MY SISTER, **BODON**.

YOUR **TWIN**?!

-HIDDEN TALENTS WHICH I WILL **FEEL** OUT.

GIVE US A KISS, HONEY.

--IK!

CRUNCH!

SHE'S DEAD- A DEADLING!

WE ARE TWINS, BUT SHE'S MORE STUBBORN AND CONTRARY THAN I AM.

NO! SHE'S NOT DEAD! IT'S JUST AN ENCHANTMENT! IT WILL WEAR OFF IN A FEW DAYS. SAY, WE COULD HEAD BACK SOUTH TO FALMOT AND SEEK AN OCCULT PHYSICIAN.

NOT A CHANCE.

THREE TRAVELERS, WITH DIFFERENT MOTIVES IN MIND -

A SCENARIO THAT USUALLY SPELLS BETRAYAL IN THIS TREACHEROUS -

TUGAT, MY FRIEND, MY SISTER NEEDS TO SEE A **DOCTOR** IN FALMOT. HOW ABOUT IT? WE'RE A **TEAM** NOW!

MURKY WORLD

TEAM MY **ASS**. YOU **STOLE** MY HORSE. GO TO FALMOT; I'M NOT STOPPING YOU.

I'M SURE WHEREVER YOU ARE GOING YOU COULD USE MORE **MONEY**. BODON AND I HAVE A HIDDEN **TREASURE** LESS THAN A DAY'S WALK FROM HERE.

ALL YOU CAN CARRY FOR THE HORSE. **DEAL?**

I WOULD **NEVER** SELL MY FRIEND FRIX.

WE'RE **PALS!**

YOU DRIVE A **HARD** BARGAIN! OKAY, JUST TRAVEL WITH US TO FALMOT, AND KEEP **ALL** THE TREASURE YOU AND FRIX CAN CARRY OFF.

"TREASURE"?

JUST LET ME SHOW YOU- **THEN** DECIDE.

WELL, I COULD USE SOME MONEY. I'LL **LOOK.**

YOU WON'T REGRET IT. **THIS** WAY!

IT IS WELL HIDDEN, BUT- WHAT ARE THESE **OTHER** TRACKS?

OURS! WE TRAVELED FROM HERE **YESTERDAY.**

IN THIS CAVE, OUR **GIGANTIC** HOARD.

THIS HAD BETTER BE GOOD.

MORE THAN YOU AND YOUR HORSE CAN CARRY! UP THOSE STAIRS.

HERE. TO LIGHT YOUR WAY.

IN HERE?

I SEE IT!

GOLD, SILVER, JEWELRY, ARTIFACTS. **YES!**

FRIX AND I WILL HAVE TO TAKE **MANY** TRIPS TO GET IT ALL. **HA! HA! HA!**

GOLDEN TRINKETS, COINS, PRECIOUS STONES. MAYBE **MOJA** WILL CHANGE HER MIND ABOUT **ME.**

-AND **FRIX** WILL HAVE HER OWN BARN AND ALL THE HORSE FRIENDS SHE WANTS.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THOSE TWO COLLECTED **ALL** THIS STUFF.

WAIT A MINUTE. MAYBE THEY **DIDN'T.** MAYBE THEY JUST **FOUND** IT. MAYBE THIS STUFF BELONGS TO SOMEONE **ELSE.**

DRIVER, **STOP!**

I NEED TO STRETCH MY LEGS FOR A MINUTE.

GET ME A **DRINK.** WHAT WAS YOUR NAME? **BUTTERCUP,** WAS IT?

AH, THAT'S **GOOD** WINE.

NO! YOU DON'T GET ANY.

IT MIGHT **SLOW** YOU DOWN, AND I'M PAYING **GOOD** MONEY FOR THIS TRANSPORT.

LET'S **GO!**

I WANT TO REACH YOUR WAY STATION BEFORE DARK.

I KNOW MASTER OBEX SAID IT'S WRONG TO **STEAL**

-BUT

LOOKS LIKE IT'S MINE, NOW!

FRIX CAN CARRY THIS LOAD EASILY, AND WE'LL BE RICH!

HEY, GUNO! WE CAN GET TO FALMOT FASTER IF YOU AND BODON HELP ME CARRY THIS OUT.

BONE!

AND THEY'VE TAKEN FRIX! NO! THIS **CAN'T** BE!

DAMN! DAMN! DAMN!!

THUD!

I CAN'T BELIEVE MY OWN **STUPIDITY!** **NEVER** TRUST A FEMALE!

HEY! WHY ARE YOU STOPPING?

OH! THIS IS THE WAY STATION? NOT VERY **LUXURIOUS** FOR WHAT I'M **PAYING.**

DATES, BISCUITS, WINE-- **SURELY** THAT'S NOT ALL?

GGGRR!!

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

SNIFF SNORT!

WHAT THE HELL?

GROWRR!!!

HOLY CRAP!

EEERRGGHH!!

DRIVER, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING? I'M **HUNGRY!**

IF I HAD KNOWN THE SERVICE WAS SO **BAD**, I WOULD HAVE HIRED A DIFFERENT CAB TO FALMOT.

TUGAT'S IN A SEEMINGLY **INESCAPABLE** TRAP, BUT HIS PLIGHT IS ABOUT TO GET MUCH, MUCH **WORSE-**

-AS EVENTS OFTEN SEEM TO TRANSPIRE IN MURKY WORLD

WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT?

WHAT? YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING!

HA! HA! HA! WHAT AN EXPERIENCE! A TALE FOR MY COLLEAGUES.

SLORK!

UMPH IK

SLUUCK!

STOP! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

AAUUHH! NO! STOP! **NOOOO!** UUMMPH!

CRUNCH!

CHOMP! MUNCH! MMPH! SNORT!

CHOMP! CHOMP! GULP!

ZZZZ ZZZ ZZZ ZZZ ZZZZ ZZZ

THERE'S GOT-- UUNH!

--TO BE-- EEERRGH!

--A WAY--

--OUT! AAWRGH!

DAWN ASCENDS, SMOLDERING AND FOREBODING.

YAAAWWNN!

EER?

HE, HE, HEH!

UURRHH?

AAAHHHHH!

IT'S NOW OR NEVER-

OOOFF!

THAT WON'T HOLD HER FOR LONG. I'VE GOT TO GET OUTTA HERE!

FOR INNUMERABLE DAYS, TUGAT TRAVERSES THE UNFORGIVING DESERT. THE UNRELENTING HEAT BURNS OUT EVERY THOUGHT BUT ONE-

MUST. FIND. FRIX.

LITTLE DOES POOR TUGAT REALIZE, HE HAS TRAVELED ALL THIS WAY JUST TO END UP BACK AT THE **BEGINNING** OF HIS TALE.

AND IT'S CLEAR HE STILL NEEDS OLD MAG'S **AID**... AND MAYBE LATER, HER **COMFORT** AS WELL.

HEY! TUGAT! IF YOU WANT TO FIND YOUR HORSE--

--FOLLOW ME.

FRIX! I REMEMBER THE OTHER HORSE; IT'S LOD PHATUUS' STALLION - **MOJA** TOOK HIM.

DO YOU LIKE HIM, FRIX?

TIME FOR THAT LATER. YOU HAVE A DESTINY TO FULFILL.

I KNOW, THERE IS MORE I NEED TO REMEMBER.

ALL WILL BE REVEALED. YOU WILL FIND YOUR FATE IN THE **TOWER** THAT STANDS WITHIN THAT **TANGLE**

THANK YOU FOR THE SWORD AND WISDOM, ODD ONE.

IT SHOULD BE SOME-WHERE THIS DIRECTION... I THINK.

YOU! YOU'RE THE ONE THAT STOLE FRIX - **TWICE!**

TUBAT! YOU MUST SAVE MY SISTER BODON! ONLY **YOU** CAN DO IT!

SAVE YOUR SISTER?

WE WILL BOTH REWARD YOU BEYOND YOUR **WILDEST** DREAMS.

I WILL AWAIT YOUR RETURN, MY **HERO.**

THIS SEEMS-

-SO-

-FAMILIAR.

IN! NOW TO FIND BODON.

YE GODS! IT'S EATING HER!

TOO LATE AGAIN, HERO.

WHO COULD COMMAND SUCH A MONSTROUS ACT? IT IS DISGUSTING BEYOND UNDERSTANDING!

CRUNCH. SLURP!

HI THERE, TUGAT. I GUESS YOU GOT OFF THAT CRUMBLING WALL OKAY.

LONG TIME, NO SEE.

MOJA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

TUGAT, DISTRAUGHT AND BEWILDERED, DISCOVERS THAT THE INIQUITOUS WOMAN HE LOVED IS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE **GRISLY** DEMISE OF THE TWIN HE WAS CHARGED WITH RESCUING. **HORROR** UPON **HORROR** PERSISTS IN ASSAULTING OUR BELEAGUERED PROTAGONIST OF -

MURKY WORLD

WHAT'S THE MATTER, TUGAT? AREN'T YOU GLAD TO SEE ME?

...AND IT'S ABOUT TO GET **WORSE**

NOT ON YOUR LIFE, YOU TRAITOROUS **BITCH!**

THEN MAYBE YOU'D RATHER-

REACQUAINT YOURSELF WITH-

YOUR OLD FRIEND-

R-R-RRAUGH!

MAL DWED.

YOU **IDIOT!** IT WAS **ME** ALL ALONG.

I WARNED YOU ONCE BEFORE THAT YOU ARE **DOOMED** - AND NOW YOUR DOOM IS **NIGH!**

SIC'IM ESRIB!

SSSRROOJGH!!

EERRGH!

USING LIGHTNING MOVEMENTS, TUGAT **SLICES** THROUGH THE AIR AND INTO THE SLITHERY BEAST, BUT DOES **NOT** CUT!

IT'S LIKE TRYING TO CUT INTO SOME KIND OF **SUPER-RUBBER**, ISN'T IT?!?! HE **CAN'T** BE KILLED.

HE IS YOUR **DOOM!**

THWACK

UGH!

RROJRR

TUGAT TRIES ALL OF THE DIVERSE SKILLS HE LEARNED FROM HIS MASTER, OBEX -

- TO NO AVAIL.

TWAK

ESRIG IS TOO FAST AND COMPLETELY IMPENETRABLE

SNAP

THE BATTLE ENDURES FOR MANY MINUTES.

TUGAT LEAPS AND DODGES, STRUGGLING TO KEEP AWAY FROM THOSE SNAPPING, GULPING JAWS - BUT - INEVITABLY-

- HIS LEGS GET CAPTURED AND IMMOBILIZED... THIS IS THE END.

THASAIDON PRESERVE ME!

YOUR FIGHTING PROWESS IS SO **INADEQUATE.**

SUCH **DELICIOUS** FUN!

FUTILELY, TUGAT CONTINUES BATTLING THE UNCANNY CREATURE.

MY LITTLE PET HAS **GOT** YOU NOW! NEXT HE WILL START **SUCKING** AND **GULPING** IRRESISTIBLY, AND **DOWN** YOU WILL GO! **STRUGGLE** ALL YOU WANT.

YOU'VE LASTED LONGER THAN MOST, TUGAT, BUT IT WON'T BE LONG, NOW. HE, HE, HEH!

DOOMED! I CAN'T KILL THIS **HELL-SPAWN.**

BUT - PERHAPS-

-I CAN KILL **YOU!**

ARGH! NOOO!!!

SLICE!!

THE RING!!

RRURRR?

I'VE GOT TO GET IT BACK!

THE THING FLIES AT ITS FORMER MISTRESS BEFORE SHE CAN MOVE.

SSSRROUGH

-EEK!

THAT DEMON HATES DWED MORE THAN IT HATES ME.

AAAAAHH! DAMN YOU, TUBAT!! DAMN YOU! DAMN YOU!! DAMN YOU!!!

EVEN A POWERFUL, MALEVOLENT SORCERESS IS NO MATCH -

-CHOKE!-

- FOR THIS DARK, FOUL CREATURE FROM THE NETHERWORLD.

DWED IS DEAD, BUT I HAVE A FEELING I'M NEXT.

THE HELL-SPAWN GLARES AT TUGAT.

THEN SHIMMERS.

THEN FADES.

WHAT?!?!

THE FOUL ENCHANTMENT IS BROKEN, RELEASING THE MONSTER TO WHATEVER ABOMINABLE NETHERWORLD FROM WHICH IT HAD BEEN SUMMONED.

THE CITADEL CRUMBLES, NO LONGER SUSTAINED BY THE NECROMANCY THAT CREATED IT!

OH NO! BODON!

KABOOM-GLUD

BUT WAIT! WHAT'S THAT?

TUGAT! YOU DID IT!

YOU'RE **HURT**, MY BRAVE CHAMPION. LET ME **HELP** YOU. BUT WHERE IS **BODON?**

SHE WAS...SHE... SHE DIDN'T MAKE IT.

...WHAT?!

YOU **DIDN'T SAVE** HER, YOU COWARDLY **ASSHOLE?** YOU PUNY WEAK **BASTARD!!**

GUNO, WE CAN JOIN FORCES AGAINST THIS **INHOSPITABLE** WORLD. WE'RE A **TEAM**, LIKE YOU SAID.

GOD **DAMN** YOU, TUGAT!!

STUPID AS WELL AS COWARDLY! THIS IS WHY YOU ARE ALWAYS **ALONE**. YOU ARE A WORTHLESS SLUG. **FUCK** YOU!!

WHY DOES EVERYTHING END IN DISASTER FOR ME? WOMEN HATE ME. ALL OF THEM. I WISH I COULD GET A GIRL.

YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET A GIRL - BUT NOT ONE YOU WANT. BUTTERCUP WANTS YOU FOR SOMETHING, BUT IT'S NOT LOVE. TUGAT, I THINK YOU'D BETTER GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE.

LOOK AROUND THIS WAY!

WHAT? UH, OH!!

I HAVE A FEELING OLD MAG IS GOING TO HAVE TO HELP THAT SCHLEP AGAIN SOMETIME IN -

MURKWORLD

THE END

Original black-and-white *Murky World* story
serialized in *Dark Horse Presents* (2011) #1–#3

WINDS MOAN THROUGH THE TOWERING MONOLITHS OF REMOTE NAUGHTON. TUGAT STRUGGLES FORWARD.

FRIX! FRIX! WHERE ARE YA, BOY?

FRIX, COME! TUGAT HAS A NICE CARROT FOR YOU!

STRANGERS IN NAUGHTON? NOT GOOD.

DEADLINGS!

--IK!

THUD!

EH?

CHOP!

THWAK!

--AH!

HOLY--!

CHOMP!

THAT WAS DAMNED CLOSE! WHO ARE YOU?

I AM GUNO. YOUR HORSE HAS BEEN STOLEN.

WHAT? YOU *STOLE* FRIX? WHY, YOU--

IF YOU WOULD HAVE IT BACK, FOLLOW ME.

IT WAS STOLEN BY SORGOF'S DEADLINGS. MY IMPETUOUS SISTER TRIED TO RETRIEVE IT.

SORGOF THE NECROMANCER? NOT GOOD!

BODON.

ENOUGH!

I MUST INTERROGATE THE NEW ONE--

--TO COLLATE ITS TALENTS. ARE YOU A DANCER? DANCE ***NOW!***

NO? GO FETCH ME A DRINK! ***NOW!***

VERY WELL. SWEEP UP THE FLOOR!

SORGOF'S ABODE. THERE'S YOUR HORSE. THE DEADLINGS WILL EAT IT.

DAMN IT! *NOW* WHAT?

FRONTAL ASSAULT! THERE ARE ONLY FIVE!

ARE YOU KIDDING? FIVE AGAINST *TWO?*

SCARED?

DEADLINGS! PREPARE FOR OBLIVION!

SHUT UP, YOU FOOL!

GRR!

OH CRAP!

THOK!

THWAK!

WHERE'D SHE GO?

EERG!

KEEP THEM BUSY! I'LL BE BACK IN A MINUTE.

DAMN HER!

NEVER--

--TRUST--

--A WOMAN!

OOOH, *OUCH!* C'MON, FRIX. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.

ON SECOND THOUGHT, THERE'S SOMEONE'S *BUTT* I WANT TO KICK.

GUNO!

OOF!

K-BUMP!

WHAT? TWO MORE?

YOU'VE MET MY NEW HEAD OF SECURITY. I THINK SHE MIGHT HAVE OTHER TALENTS.

MY SISTER, BODON.

NOT GOOD.

--HIDDEN TALENTS WHICH I WILL FEEL OUT.

GIVE US A KISS, HONEY.

CRUNCH!

--IK!

WE ARE TWINS, BUT SHE'S MORE STUBBORN AND CONTRARY THAN I.

SHE'S DEAD--A *DEADLING!*

NO! IT'S JUST AN ENCHANTMENT! IT'LL WEAR OFF SOON. SAY, WE COULD HEAD SOUTH TO FALMOT AND SEEK AN OCCULT PHYSICIAN.

NOT A CHANCE!

MUFFLED.

PLODDING.

MURK.

TUGAT, WE'RE JUST TWO HELPLESS WOMEN. YOU'VE GOT TO HELP US.

HELPLESS, MY ***ASS!*** IF YOU WANT TO GO TO FALMOT, GO RIGHT AHEAD. I'M NOT STOPPING YOU.

OKAY. YOU'RE TOO SMART FOR SYMPATHY.

I'VE GOT A DEAL FOR YOU.

BODON AND I HAVE A HIDDEN TREASURE LESS THAN A DAY'S WALK FROM HERE.

ALL YOU CAN CARRY! YOURS FOR THE HORSE.

FRIX IS MY FRIEND. I WOULDN'T TRADE HIM.

OKAY! YOU DRIVE A HARD BARGAIN. YOU GET THE HORSE BACK AFTER WE REACH FALMOT.

JUST LET ME SHOW YOU. THEN DECIDE.

OKAY, I'LL LOOK.

YOU WON'T REGRET IT.

THIS WAY!

IT IS WELL HIDDEN. WHAT ARE THESE OTHER TRACKS?

OURS! WE JUST CAME FROM THERE YESTERDAY.

THERE IN THE CAVE, OUR HIDDEN STASH.

THE TREASURE?

MORE THAN YOU COULD COLLECT IN A LIFETIME. UP THOSE STEPS.

HERE. TO LIGHT YOUR WAY.

EH?

I SEE IT!

GOLD, SILVER, JEWELRY, ARTIFACTS. YES!

FRIX AND I WILL HAVE TO MAKE SEVERAL TRIPS TO GET IT ALL. *HA! HA! HA!*

GOLDEN TRINKETS, COINS, PRECIOUS STONES.

I'LL BUY A MANSION FOR MA. SHE'LL BE SO PROUD!

FRIX WILL HAVE HIS OWN HAREM!

HOW LONG HAVE THOSE TWO BEEN COLLECTING THIS STUFF?

WAIT A MINUTE. MAYBE THEY DIDN'T COLLECT IT. MAYBE THEY JUST FOUND IT.

MAYBE THIS STUFF BELONGS TO SOMEONE ELSE.

HEY DRIVER, STOP!

I NEED TO STRETCH MY LEGS FOR A MINUTE.

GET ME A DRINK. WHAT WAS YOUR NAME? BUTTERFLY, WAS IT?

WINE, YES, THAT'S GOOD.

NO! ***YOU*** DON'T NEED ANY.

IT MIGHT SLOW YOU DOWN. LET'S GO!

I WANT TO REACH YOUR REST STOP BEFORE DARK.

WELL, IT'S *MINE* NOW!

TIME TO START LOADING FRIX UP.

HEY, GUNO!

YOU AND BODON HELP CARRY SOME OF THIS TO THE FRONT.

GONE!

AND THEY'VE TAKEN FRIX. *NO!* THEY COULDN'T--

DAMN! DAMN! DAMN!

I CAN'T *BELIEVE* MY OWN STUPIDITY!

DAMNED *FEMALES!* THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME.

HEY! WHY ARE YOU STOPPING?

OH! THIS IS THE REST STOP?

NOT EXACTLY LUXURIOUS.

DATES, BISCUITS, WINE-- IS THAT ALL?

GRRRR

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

SNIFF SNORT!

WHAT THE HELL?

HOLY CRAP!

GROWRR!

HEY *YOU!* DRIVER! I'M *HUNGRY!*

IF I HAD KNOWN THE *SERVICE* WAS SO *PRIMITIVE--*

--I MIGHT HAVE HIRED A DIFFERENT *CAB* TO TAKE ME TO FALMOT.

CHOMP CHOMP MUNCH

WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT?

UMPH IK

SHLORP

WHAT? YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING!

HA! HA! HA! WHAT AN EXPERIENCE! A TALE FOR MY COLLEAGUES.

STOP! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

SSUUCK

AAUUHH! STOP IT! UUMMPH!

SSHLOORK

CRUNCH!

CHOMP! MUNCH! MMPH! SNORT!

CHOMP! CHOMP! GULP!

ZZZZZ ZZZ ZZZ ZZZZZ ZZZ ZZZ

THERE'S GOT-- UUNH!

--TO BE-- EEERRGH!

--A WAY--

--OUTTA HERE! AAAWRGH!

AAAWRRGH!

UURRUH?

AAAWWH--

BUMP!

HHAUUGGH!

RRAAAGH!

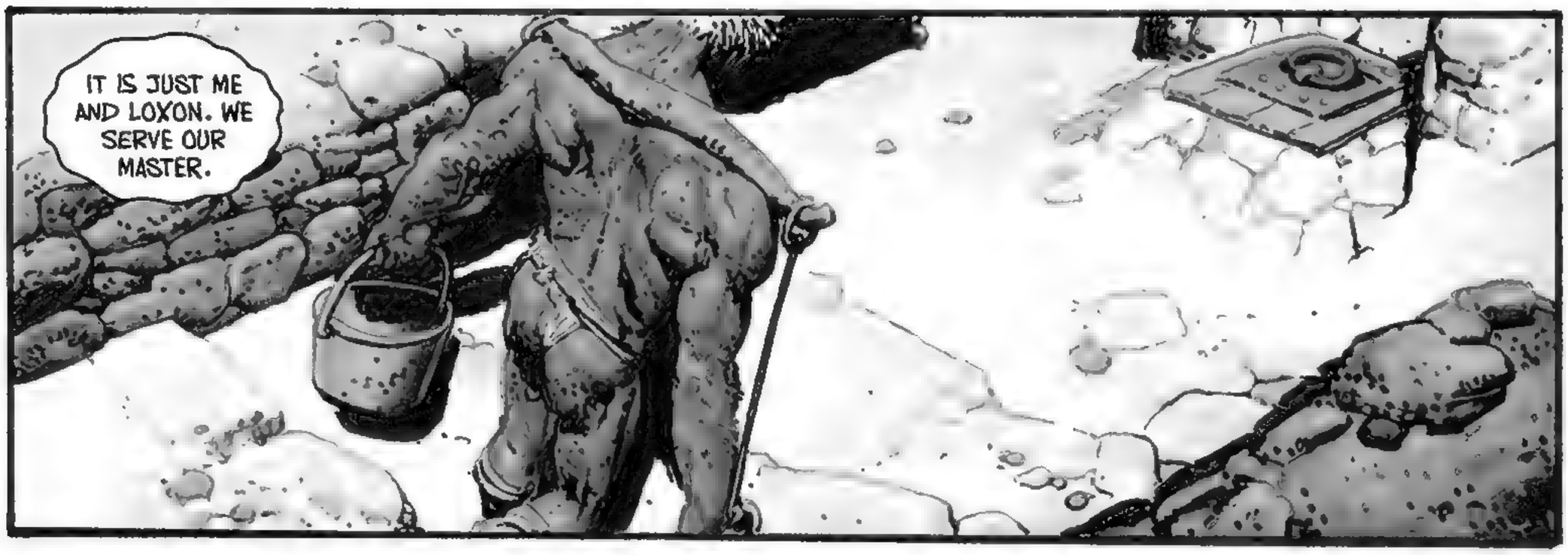
THAT WON'T TAKE HER LONG.

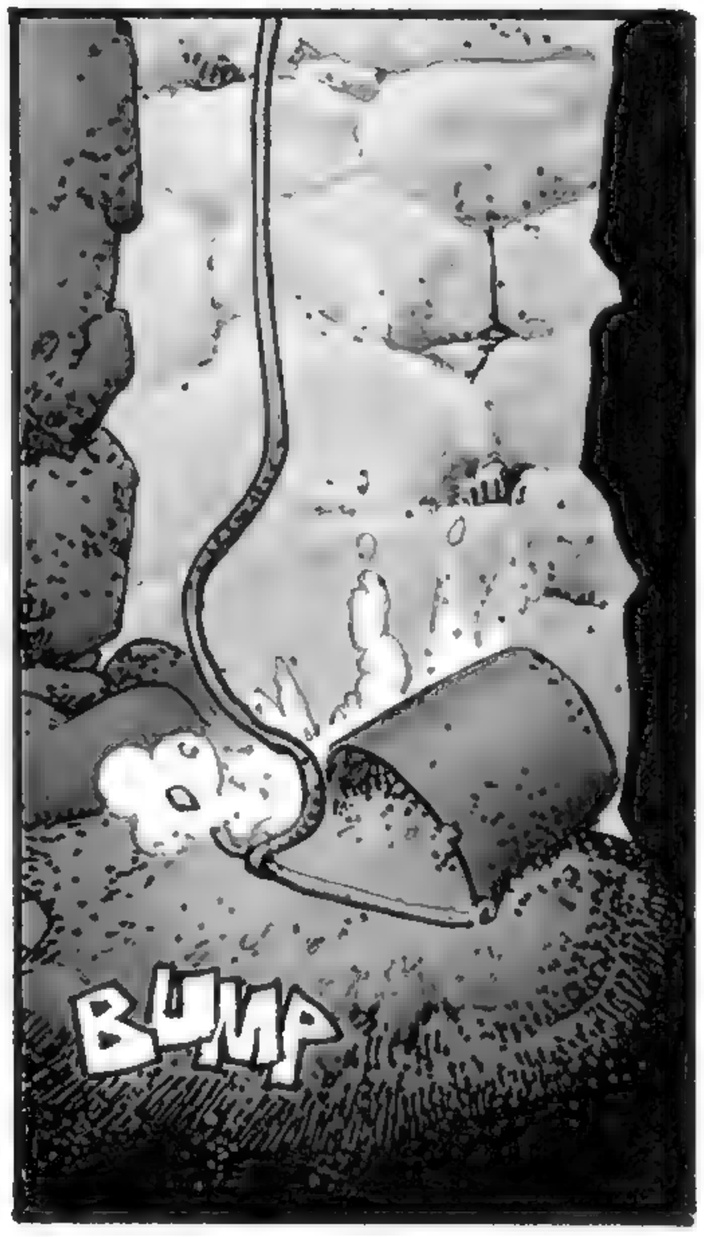
I'VE GOT TO GET OUTTA HERE!

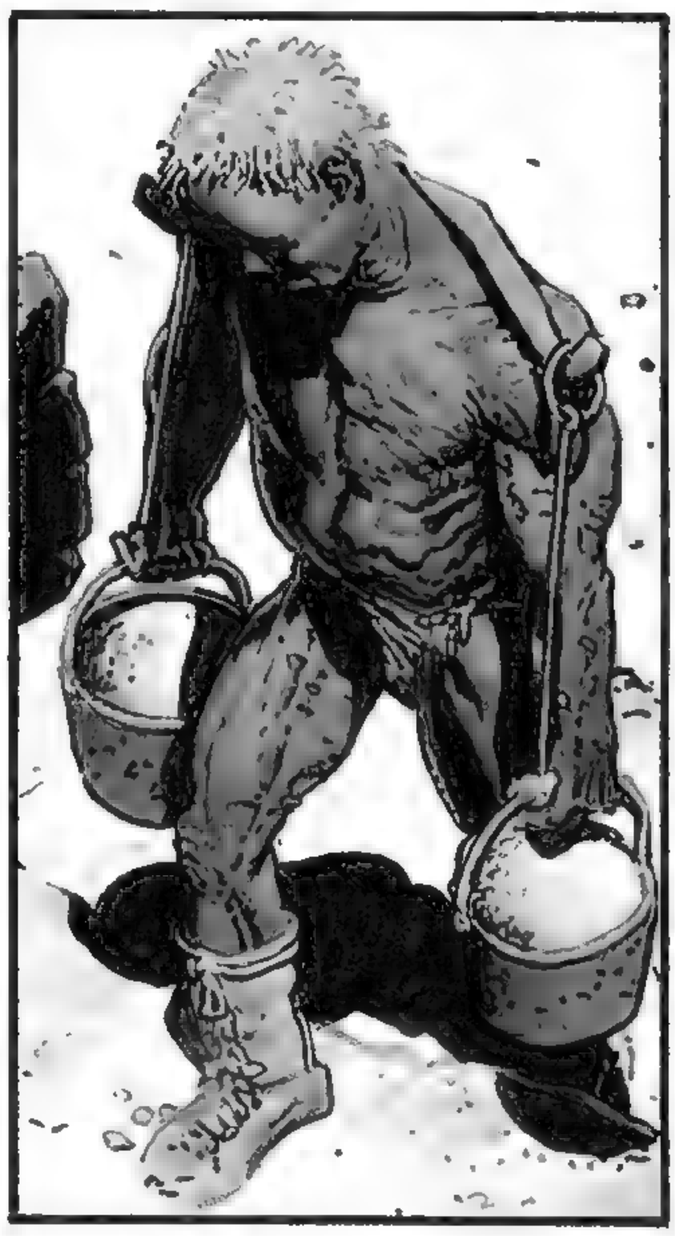
IT GETS TOO WARM, BUT WE'RE DIMLY USED TO IT. THERE IS NOT MUCH HAPPENING, BUT WE DO OUR WORK.

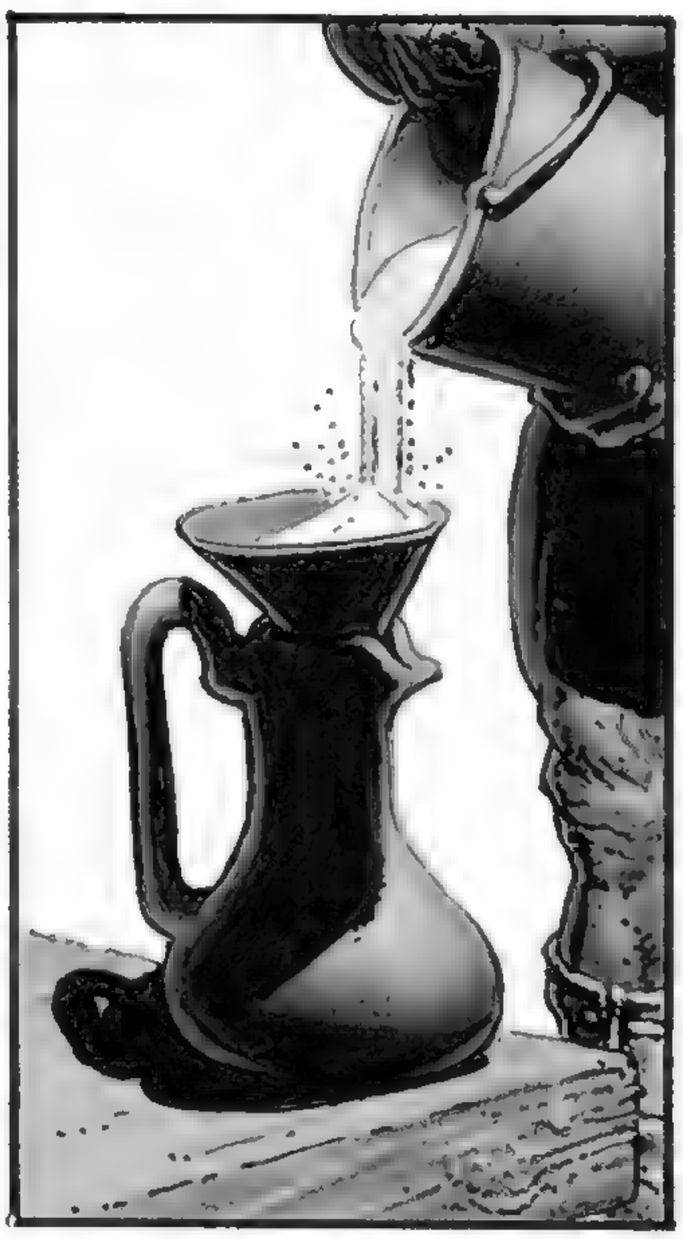
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP

LITTLE CHORES AND ERRANDS KEEP US BUSY, BUT WITHOUT ANY HURRY.


IT IS JUST ME AND LOXON. WE SERVE OUR MASTER.


BUMP





TRAVELERS ARE RARE, BUT WHEN ONE COMES WE SHOW WHAT HOSPITALITY WE CAN.

WHAT'S THIS? *SAND?!*

I SEE. TAKE ME TO YOUR MASTER.

SIR, I AM A TRAVELER AND I HOPE YOU WILL GRANT ME A DRINK OF WATER AND A SMALL--

NEVER MIND.

I QUESTION YOUR USE OF DEADLING SLAVES--

--BUT I GRANT YOU CLOSURE.

I CAN'T GIVE YOU BACK YOUR LOST LIFE, BUT YOUR SERVICE IS OVER.

I HOPE YOU CAN FIND--

--PEACE.

DAMNED SORCERER! BURN IN *HELL!*

THE END

MURKY WORLD™

GUMO
KORNU

DEADLING

FROM

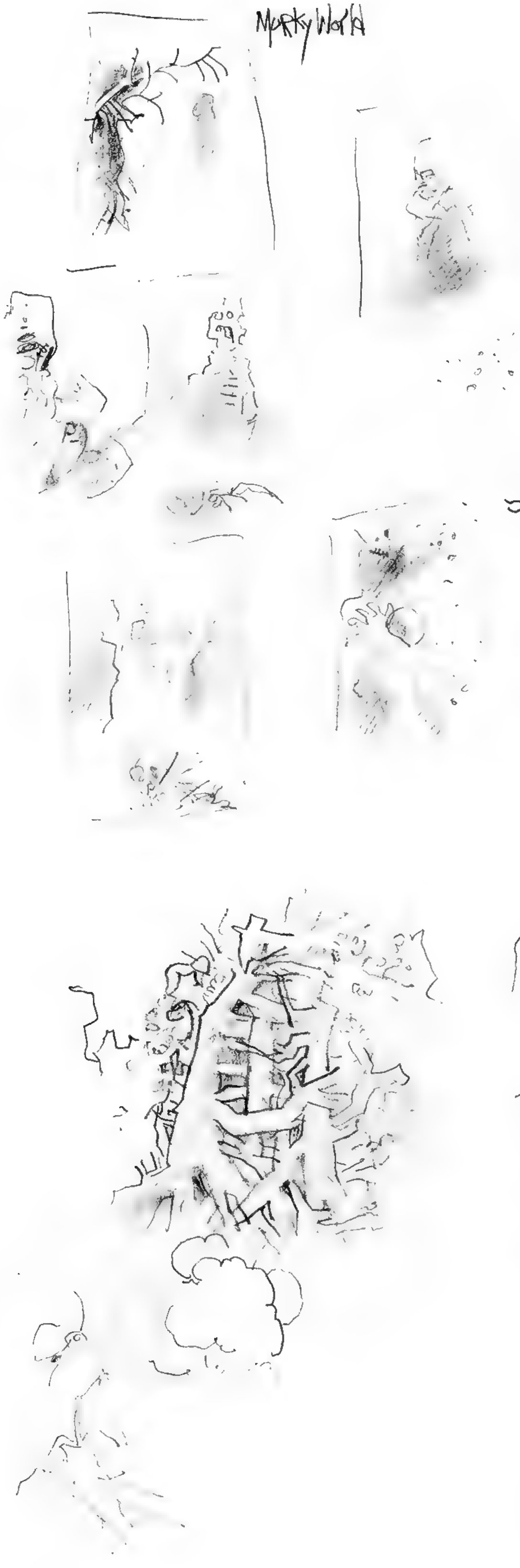
MURKYWORLD

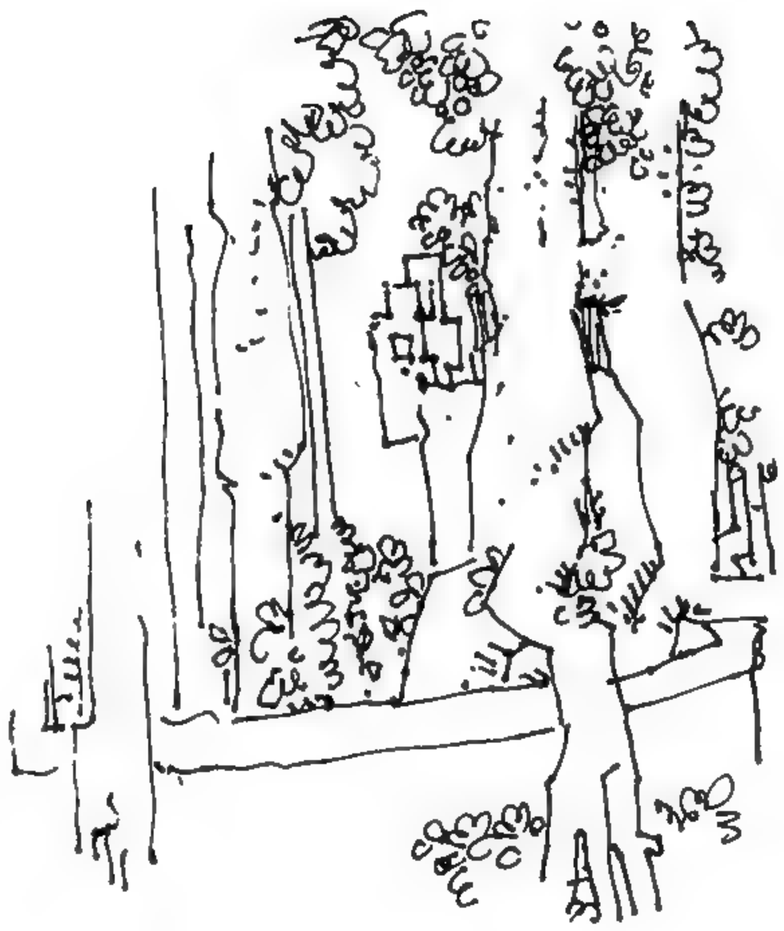
Tugat dreams
a dangerous
mission- the journey
and events go in a
complete/ unexpected
direction- the original
mission is
forgotten

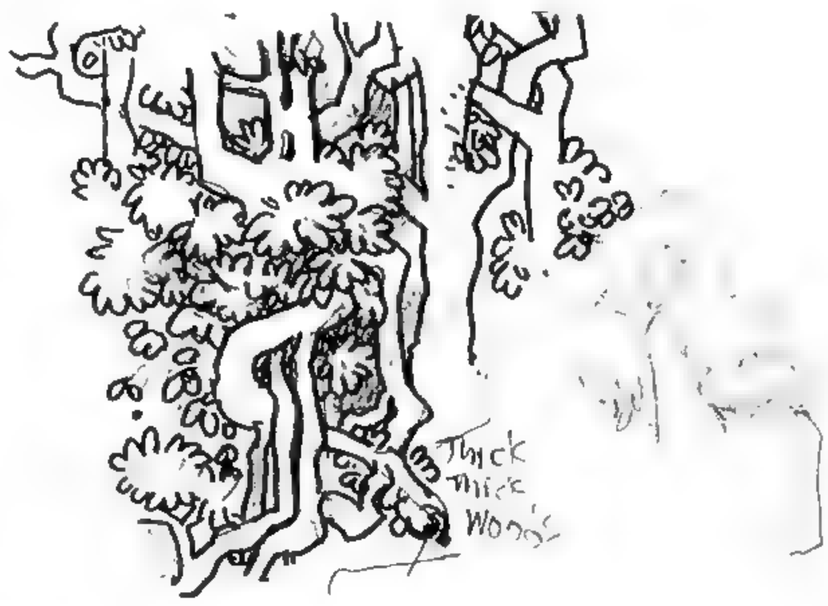
We seeke with lawless posture to oppress, But now to face defeat and shame For our late villanies.

wytches who seekes him to entrapp and slayeth him in phurie!

Murky World







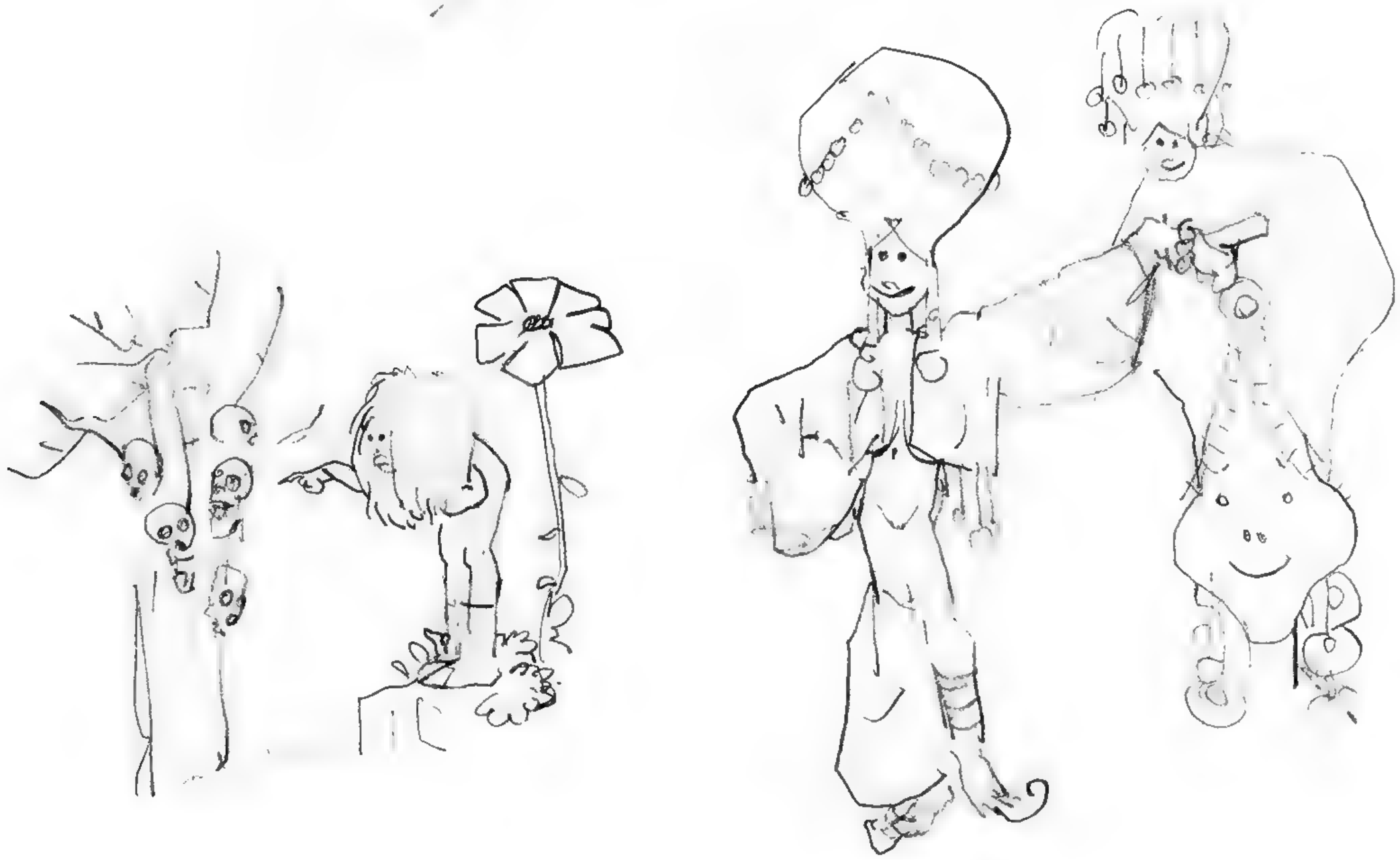
Thus haute,
With Luste
doest springeth
from their
Loines

He spide far off
a mighty Gyauntesse!!

Amores fraught
with pleasures
manifold.

hands of puppeteer

hands
of
potter
sculptor



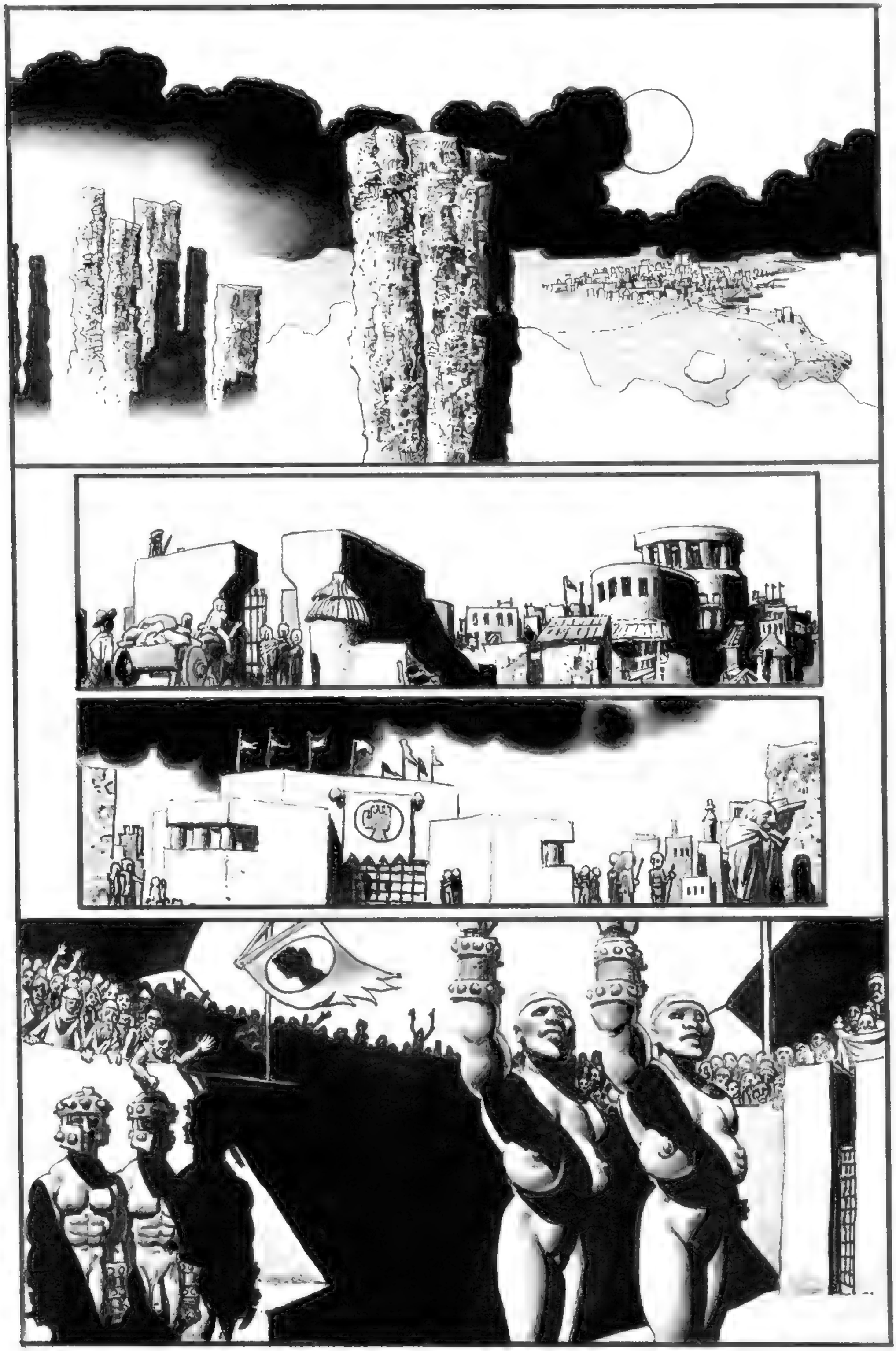
-and what befell thereby?

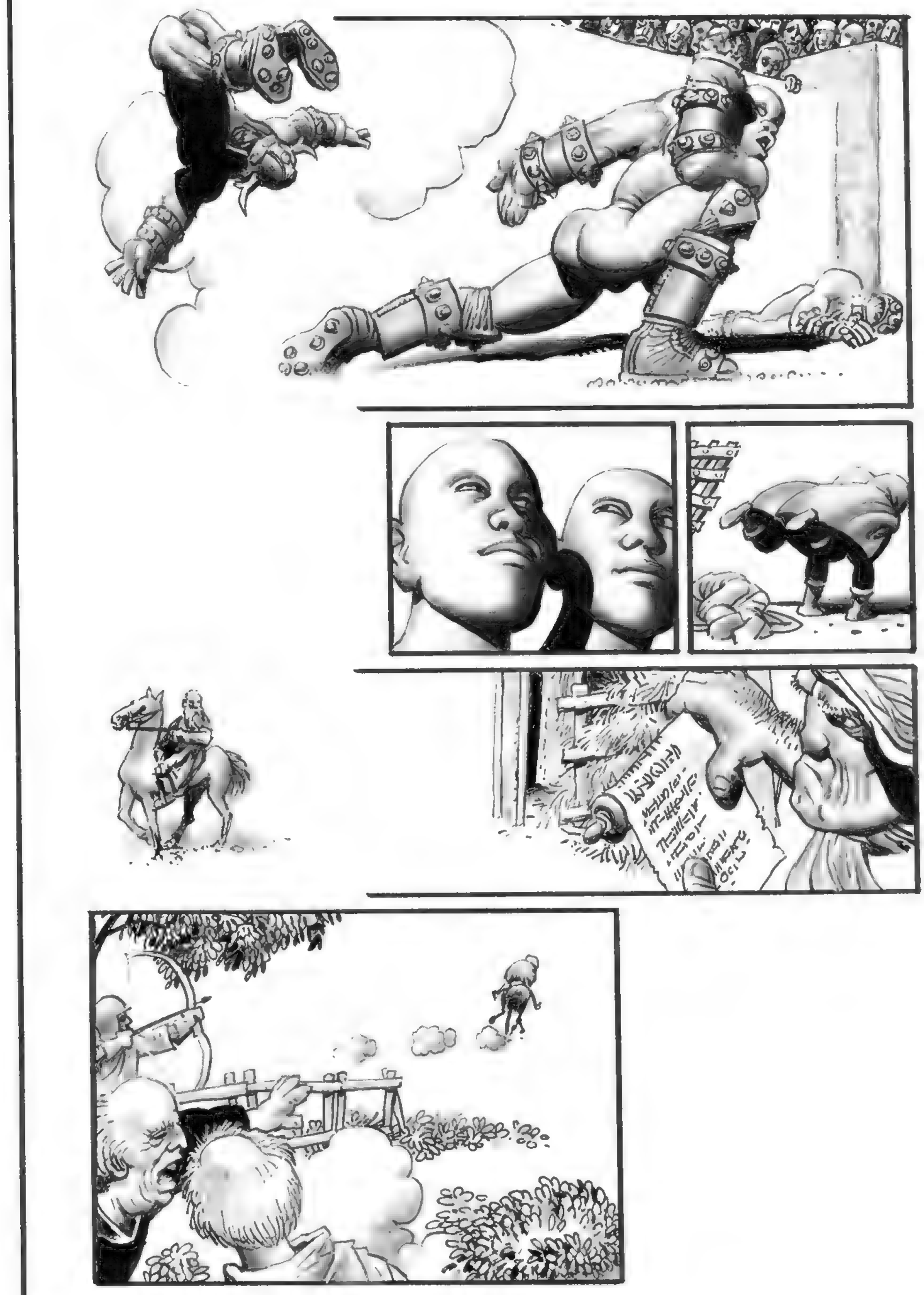
MURKWORLD

GREEN

INTRO

01





©CORBEN

© COREEN

Richard Corben was born in Missouri and grew up in Sunflower, Kansas, a community that worked for the Sunflower Ordnance Works, an army plant that manufactured bombs in World War II.

Corben drew comics all of his life. An early effort was a series of comics about the adventures of TRAIL, the family dog. Later, he created imitations of Tarzan and Brothers of the Spear. He also showed a keen interest in animation by turning many pads of paper into animated flipbooks.

While attending the Kansas City Art Institute, he concentrated on basic drawing and painting, developing skills that would become vital in creating his chosen realistic style. At that time, his college offered no courses for animation, but by using his father's 8 mm movie camera, Corben nevertheless produced a 5-minute animated film highlighting the labors of Heracles as his senior project.

After graduation, Corben wanted to go to New York to launch a career in comics or animation, but he was shy and timid, and put off such a drastic move. After working in construction for his father for a while, he found a local job as an artist/animator/cameraman in a Kansas City industrial film company. During this time, despite his shyness, he found a girl to marry him.

After nearly ten years at the film company, Corben felt frustrated that he really hadn't given his art career a chance. He started drawing so-called "underground" comix and fanzines at night after working a full-time job during the day. About this same time, Warren Publishing Company began a series of black-and-white horror comics, CREEPY, EERIE, and VAMPIRELLA. This was a perfect match for Corben's interests, and he drew several stories for CREEPY on speculation. Unfortunately, none of these were accepted. But the "wannabe" comic book artist persisted and even met James Warren at a science fiction convention. Finally, Warren and his editor, Bill Dubay, relented and started sending Corben scripts to draw. At last, a foothold was established in his comic career. Even with the responsibilities of a wife, a daughter and a mortgage, the young artist now felt confident enough to quit his full-time job at the industrial film company and devote all his time to drawing.

The underground comix surge spread to Europe, and requests to reprint Corben underground features began to appear. His fantasy character, DEN, was created for the American underground comic, GRIM WIT; DEN was next printed in the French METAL HURLANT, and then printed in the American HEAVY METAL. During this era, Richard and Dona started FANTAGOR PRESS, a publishing company featuring Richard's comics. Unfortunately, the business wasn't enough to support them. Next, Corben began drawing for American comics—D.C., MARVEL, DARK HORSE, and others.

Corben believed that maintaining drawing skills required constant practice. He regularly attended life drawing classes all throughout his career. He found the activity both an ongoing challenge and a source of pleasure.

His love and interest in animation continued throughout his lifetime and motivated him to create digitally animated movies he shared on his web site and Facebook page.

Richard was married for 56 years to Dona, and is the father of watercolor artist and comic book colorist, Beth. His life and love was devoted to his family and his art. He was a humble man and an extremely kind, good man.

Richard Corben died December 2, 2020.

"The artist I most want to aspire to is Richard Corben. His style is visual and it tells the story just as you see it . . . my favorite is Corben. I love everything he does. I love his stuff . . . he's an amazing artist."—GUILLERMO DEL TORO

Well known for his legendary fantasy underground masterpieces published by Fantagor Press as well as *Heavy Metal*, Richard Corben's work has been recognized internationally having been awarded one of the most prestigious recognitions in comics literature the Grand Prix at Angoulême as well having been inducted into the Will Eisner Award Hall of Fame.

In *Murky World*, Tugat the warrior wakes from a strange dream only to find himself in a bizarre land populated by hungry deadlings, cruel necromancers, buxom cyclops, evil cults, and more as he sets off on a dangerous journey with his beloved horse Frix.

This is the first in a series of deluxe graphic novels from renowned creator Richard Corben's library to be published by Dark Horse Comics. This special edition collects the entire *Murky World* series in print for the first time in English, and also features never-before-seen sketch material, the *Dark Horse Presents* one-shot, and an introduction by *Hellboy* creator Mike Mignola, all presented in a gorgeous hardcover with a dust jacket.

"Richard Corben stands among us like an extraterrestrial peak. He has sat in his throne a long time, above the moving and multi-colored field of world comics, like an effigy of the leader, a strange monolith, a sublime visitor, a solitary enigma"—MOEBIUS

"Mr. Richard Corben . . . a genuine giant of his chosen medium."—ALAN MOORE

DARK HORSE BOOKS
FANTAGOR PRESS

SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"